University of Alberta

Nietzschean Configurations

by

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **Nietzschean Configurations** submitted by Johannes Frederik Welfing in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature.

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Opgedragen aan mijn lieve vader en mijn lieve moeder.

Hun steun blijft altijd.

Abstract

The following is an analysis of the diversity in Nietzsche interpretation. I will focus on both Nietzsche's text and its reception, and will attempt to establish that both sides are responsible for the many configurations at hand.

The first chapter is an introductory account of some of the difficulties in Nietzsche interpretation. While focusing on problems such as concepts, style and structure in the Nietzsche text, the analysis exposes the large variety of Nietzsche interpretation itself; while moving away from the difficulty of the text, it attempts to demonstrate that the different interpretations, rather than referring to Nietzsche and his writing, are first and foremost indicative of the methodological stance of the interpreters themselves.

The following chapter proposes a classification of critics according to the degree in which Nietzsche is thought to transcend the traditional boundaries of the metaphysical tradition. The second part of this chapter raises the question of a Nietzschean inconsistency in the Nietzsche text itself on the question of metaphysics.

The third chapter deals with the question of the Dionysian in both Nietzsche and others, and examines the extent to which this notion has changed in Nietzsche.

The final three chapters are examples of Nietzsche interpretation. The first and second part of this final section focus on literary appropriations of Nietzsche. While problematizing the more traditional notions and assumptions that underlie the exercise of influence, I intend to show in these chapters how appropriation of

a Nietzschean premise takes place in a work of literature. The first chapter of the second part focuses on André Gide and Hermann Hesse, authors whose literary production takes place under the imperative of a modernist aesthetic. The second deals with Milan Kundera, often referred to as a postmodern writer and thinker.

The final chapter focuses on Jacques Derrida, and his intricate and rather playful style of Nietzsche interpretation. By moving away from a traditional type of philosophical investigation, Derrida's analysis evolves along the fine line that separates philosophy from fiction, seriousness from play, or truth from artistic creation.

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I would like to thank Professor Edward Mozejko and Paul Morris, two people who have been crucial to the successful completion of my degree.

The German equivalent of 'supervisor' is Doktorvater; Professor Mozejko was precisely this: more ein Doktorvater than supervisor.

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INTRODUCTION

The diversity of Nietzsche interpretation

In his study on Wittgenstein, the Dutch author and critic Willem Frederik Hermans makes a distinction between scientific treatises and those that belong to the discipline of philosophy. While the former deal with a more detached type of material, the latter are inevitably more personal. The scientific premises of a Newton or an Einstein, while maintaining their status as truth, are liable to be incorporated in a theory that either develops or surpasses them. The scientific truth, according to Hermans, is able to withstand the appropriative act of the interpreter that uses it better than its philosophical counterpart. About the philosophers's "creations," Hermans states that "[they] may have the pretension of being (...) part of a large, all-inclusive science, which is philosophy, yet that in reality these creations have nothing more in common than *Les Fleurs du Mal* and *The Brothers Karamazov*. That they are no more part of one, universal Building as the Dome of Cologne and the Stock Exchange of Berlage."[1]

Hermans speaks of philosophers in terms of "poets" and "novelists," and of their creations as a very personal set of truths that resist incorporation into a theory that is not their own. If introduced nonetheless, these truths change. To understand the truths of philosophical investigation is to go back to the person who created them.

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[1] The quote reads: (...) filosofen (...) leven naast elkaar als dichters of romanschrijvers, in hoogst persoonlijke scheppingen, die wel pretenderen met elkaar samen te hangen, die wel bedoeld zijn als onderdeel van een grote, alles overkoepelende wetenschap: de *filosofie*, maar in feite even weinig met elkaar te maken hebben als *Les Fleurs du Mal* met *De gebroeders Karamazov* en even

Hermans' provocative remarks on the limitations of philosophy (though, a powerful thinker himself, he is far from proclaiming the uselessness of philosophical inquiry) touch on an interesting point: philosophers, much like poets and novelists, create a fictional universe of their own. One that can be understood only from the perspective of the philosopher's thought in its entirety.

In the same study, Hermans speaks of the problem of Wittgenstein's *Nachlaß*. The book, entitled *Philosophische Bemerkungen*, for instance, may have been finished --or almost finished-- prior to his death. Wittgenstein, himself, however, never actually decided to publish it. Hermans states that the fact that Wittgenstein held on to his manuscript does not prove his intention to publish it:

> (…) the completed or almost completed book *Philosophische Bemerkungen* was published posthumously. Wittgenstein, himself, would not have done this, because substantial parts did not satisfy him (…). Would not it have been better for him to have burned the manuscript? It wouldn't, of course, since it is very possible that he wanted to use parts of it at a later time, or that he wanted to rewrite it, for instance. (…) The fact that he preserved the manuscript, however, does *not* prove that he wished to have it published by others after his death. And yet, this is exactly what happened in 1964[2]

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weinig onderdeel zijn van één universeel Gebouw, als de Dom van Keulen en de Beurs van Berlage dat zijn (W.F. Hermans: *Wittgenstein*. Nijmegen: Thieme, 1990, 104)

[2] Hermans' full quote reads: (...) in 1964 is, postuum, het voltooide of vrijwel voltooide boek *Philosophische Bemerkungen* gepubliceerd. Wittgenstein zelf had dit niet gedaan, omdat veel van wat erin stond hem achteraf niet bevredigde. Had hij het dan niet beter in de kachel kunnen gooien? Nee natuurlijk, want mogelijk is hij van plan geweest er later toch nog stukken uit te gebruiken, of het te herschrijven, of iets dergelijks. Of hij heeft het alleen bewaard om te kunnen herlezen hoe hij over bepaalde zaken dacht, in de tijd waarin hij het schreef (ca. 1930). Maar dat

Hermans' observations here are relevant to an analysis that focuses on the difficulty of interpretation. Although, I will not be speaking of Wittgenstein, it is clear that the problems discussed pertain to any philosopher who is eager to pass on his or her understanding of the world to others. The consideration, for instance, of what to publish and what to withhold is something that concerns most philosophers. It certainly concerned Nietzsche.

This analysis will focus on the diversity of Nietzsche interpretation. Hermans' observations clearly indicate some of the reasons behind this diversity. Philosophy is not a mathematical formula or a metaphysical equation to be passed on from one thinker to another. The question of the *Nachlaß* must demonstrate that, in the final analysis, interpretation and understanding reside in the person who does the interpreting. The philosopher is only partially responsible for his own text. Ultimately, the meaning of the text is established, not by the philosopher, but by the interpretive gaze of the one who reads it.[3]

In the following, beyond the more general explanations provided in the previous section, I will be dealing with the question of what makes Nietzsche

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hij het bewaarde bewijst *niet* dat hij het graag na zijn dood door anderen liet openbaren. Toch is dit gebeurd, in 1964 (249).

[3] A philosopher and critic like Derrida, in this context, speaks of the inherently 'posthumous' nature of writing itself. The thinker may write, yet the reader signs the text.

interpretation so diverse. I will also discuss the diversity of the interpretation itself.

This question, in my opinion, allows for two different approaches: a hermeneutic and an empirical one. A hermeneutic approach to the plurality of Nietzsche interpretation would hold that the difficulty of interpretation primarily resides in Nietzsche's philosophy itself. Nietzsche's writing, more than that of most other thinkers, because of a number of difficulties in the text itself, lends itself to this plurality.

The more empirical approach to Nietzsche, however, would concentrate on the different interpretations themselves. Rather than proclaiming the specificity of the Nietzsche text itself, it would investigate the different critical manifestations, and hold that these are indicative of changes in society and the intellectual development of its members, rather than reflective of the complexity of the Nietzsche text itself. An empirical approach will reveal more about attitudes towards the text, about society and the ways in which interpretation has changed over the years.[4]

---

[4] I concede that this definition of "empirical" may be problematic or rather limited: interpreting the different interpretations of the Nietzsche text is, in a sense, a no less hermeneutic approach than interpreting the Nietzsche text itself. Yet, my point is that the taking of these manifestations as a point of departure in the study of a Nietzschean interpretive diversity is an empirical procedure, at least in principle; it deals with the difficulty of reception. I am referring here also to S.J. Schmidt and his *Grundriss der empirischen Literaturwissenschaft* (2 vols., 1980-1982). In *Lexicon van Literaire Termen* (van Gorp. Leuven: Wolters Kluwers, 1991, 116-17), the authors provide a definition of empirical literature: "Het onderzoeksobject van de empirische literatuurwetenschap is dus niet de text op zich, maar de zgn. handelingsrollen binnen het literaire systeem, nl. produktie, distributie, receptie en verwerking van teksten." In *Rezeptionsforschung als empirische Literaturwissenschaft* (Groeben. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1980), Groeben argues: "Für die empirische Literatur wissenschaft ist der fundierende Ausgangspunkt (...) das von (möglichst vielen) Rezipienten verstandene Werk (...)" (10-11).

For my analysis as a whole, I propose a combination of the two approaches. I will argue that both the Nietzsche text and the different ways in which it has been received are worthy of attention, and that, in fact, both the message and its reception are valid starting points in an analysis on the plurality of Nietzsche interpretation. I will attempt to establish and show, as a point of departure, how this diversity is created. Ultimately, the investigation will also provide us with some useful insights into the workings of interpretation, whether this question is approached from a hermeneutic or from --what may be considered-- a more empirical perspective. At the end, we will know better which of the two approaches will have served our purposes most effectively.

In this dissertation, I will be speaking, then, of both Nietzsche and his interpreters. The first chapter will be an introductory account of some of the difficulties in Nietzsche interpretation to date. While focusing on problems such as concepts, style and structure in the Nietzsche text, the analysis, in its first conception, will expose the large variety of Nietzsche interpretation itself: while moving away from the difficulty of the text, it will attempt to demonstrate that the different interpretations, rather than referring to Nietzsche and his writing, are first and foremost indicative of the methodological stance of the interpreters themselves. Nietzsche, then, will be considered as a prism, and the different interpretations as bundles of light that capture its essence. Yet the essence of the Nietzschean prism may be difficult to find; the lights could be merely reflections of pre-conceived methods and opinions. Rather than focusing on the hermeneutic question of content, this chapter will deal with the different manifestations of its manifold reception. While the first and second part focus on the questions of concept and style as points of contention in Nietzsche, the third part will be more concerned with the different ways in which the structure of Nietzsche's oeuvre has been used for interpretation.

The following chapter, by way of an opening analysis, will propose a classification of critics according to the degree to which Nietzsche is thought to transcend the traditional boundaries of the metaphysical tradition. While for some critics his philosophy continues to be animated by a desire for truth, others will emphasize the novelty of a philosophical project that questions the very premises on which it is based. The second part of this chapter will raise the interesting question of a Nietzschean inconsistency on the question of metaphysics, and will attempt to establish to what extent the paradigm of the child at play, argument of an important and contemporary brand of Nietzsche interpretation, can be said to be truly based on the Nietzsche text.

The third chapter will deal with the question of the Dionysian in both Nietzsche and others, and will attempt to establish to what extent this notion has changed and developed in the Nietzsche text itself. By investigating some of the designations that Nietzsche uses to describe the Dionysian state, this chapter will hope to provide some useful insights into the nature of how Nietzsche wishes this important phenomenon to take place on the level of human beings.

The final three chapters will be examples of Nietzsche interpretation. The first and second part of this final section will focus on literary appropriations of

Nietzsche. While turning the more traditional notions and assumptions that underlie the exercise of influence into a problematic, these particular chapters will attempt to show how appropriation of a Nietzschean premise takes place in a work of literature. While the first chapter focuses on the relevance for writers of a work such as *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, the second will be more concerned with the importance of the aphoristic writings. The first chapter will focus on André Gide and Hermann Hesse, authors whose literary production takes place under the imperatives of a modernist aesthetic. The second will deal with Milan Kundera, often referred to as a postmodern writer and thinker.

The final chapter will focus on Jacques Derrida, and his intricate and rather playful style of Nietzsche interpretation. By moving away from a traditional type of philosophical investigation, Derrida's analysis evolves along the fine line that separates philosophy from fiction, seriousness from play, truth from artistic creation. While focusing, for the greater part, on the method through which Derrida's Nietzsche takes shape, the analysis can be said to deal with yet another example of artistic appropriation.

I will use, as much as I can, the original texts in the original language, especially then when I consider the language to be an important component in the understanding of the text. I have rendered all Nietzsche quotes in German, except in those instances where these quotes are used in a critical work on Nietzsche, and are part of an argument in these particular texts. I have provided an additional translation in those cases where this might be helpful for the understanding of a text. I have translated all sections into English for which no English translation existed.

CHAPTER ONE

ON THE FLUIDITY OF NIETZSCHE'S WRITING: NIETZSCHE AS PRISM

> Leben selbst ist *wesentlich* Aneignung, Verletzung, Überwältigung des Fremden und Schwächeren, Unterdrückung, Härte, Aufzwängung eigner Formen, Einverleibung und mindestens, mildestens, Ausbeutung (*JGB*, 259).

The starting point of my analysis on the variety of Nietzsche interpretation has to be Nietzsche's philosophy proper. Before going into the intricacies of the different interpretations, it is wise to start off with the thought itself. We must concern ourselves with questions such as why there are so many interpretations of his philosophy, and what it is that makes him somehow so fluid. Even today, publications such as *Nietzsche as Postmodernist: essays pro and contra* indicate that the controversy about Nietzsche's intentions is of topical interest.[1] There has never been any real consensus about what Nietzsche had to say, nor about the questions of how and why he said it the way he did. In fact, interpretations often have a contradictory nature (I will return to this in chapter two).

Longinus Dohmen, in his analysis of what he has termed Nietzsche's "veiled anthropology," argues that on the most basic premises of Nietzsche's philosophy interpreters will disagree. He states: "[o]ne should conduct a simple experiment and ask any number of Nietzsche specialists the following questions on his world view. Does Nietzsche actually possess a cosmology, and if so what is its nature? Is Nietzsche's world a world of order or of chaos? Are there any laws underlying this world, and if so which are they? Is reality for Nietzsche purely accidental, intentional or just merely based on necessity? Which thinkers have influenced Nietzsche's outlook on nature? I'm putting it mildly when stating that the answers to these questions will considerably differ with each interpreter" (204).[2]

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[1] *Nietzsche as Postmodernist: essays pro and contra*. Ed. Clayton Koelb. New York: The State University of New York Press, 1990.

For Dohmen, one of the reasons for this disagreement lies in the fact that the major tenets of his philosophy are never explicitly and systematically elaborated. The interpreter of Nietzsche, therefore, is faced with the difficult task of uncovering an argument which not only has evolved over time, but one that consists of a large number of scattered fragments. Other critics may propose different reasons for this thorough disagreement over Nietzsche, yet the majority of them hold at least some opinion about Nietzsche's distinctive philosophy and style.

In the following, I intend to analyse a few difficulties of Nietzsche's thought and style. Nietzsche's text is not a pamphlet or manifesto, lucidly structured to convince as many a reader as possible. This is not a new observation: as said, many critics have discussed the fluidity of his writing. Yet, these observations often remain too tentative, and never really comment upon in a systematic fashion. In this chapter, I will specifically refer to a number of critics who have dealt with the question of understanding Nietzsche, and will attempt to establish that for a large number of them the difficulty of interpretation is indicative of what Nietzsche was trying to say. Style and content converge in a clear message about nothing less than the incommunicability of the message itself. I should add, perhaps unnecessarily, that

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[2] Longinus Dohmen: *Nietzsche over de menselijke natuur: Een uiteenzetting van zijn verborgen antropologie*. Kampen: Kok Agora, 1994. The full quote reads: "Men neme de proef op de som en stelle aan een willekeurig aantal Nietzsche-specialisten de volgende vragen over zijn wereldbeeld. Heeft Nietzsche wel een eigen kosmologie en zo ja wat voor een? Is de wereld volgens Nietzsche orde of chaos, heersen er natuurwetten en zo ja welke? Ziet Nietzsche in de werkelijkheid toeval, opzet of noodzaak? Welke auteurs hebben hem beïnvloed in zijn denken over de natuur? Ik druk mij voorzichtig uit als ik stel dat de antwoorden behoorlijk uiteen zullen lopen. (Dat is niet per se de schuld van de Nietzsche-commentatoren. Evenals dat het geval is met zijn visie op de mens heeft Nietzsche namelijk een verborgen visie op de natuur ontwikkeld)" (204).

I do not intend to say anything definitive about the content of Nietzsche's writing. Besides the fact that many commentators have done so (and undoubtedly better than myself), this is not the place for such an analysis. What I will indicate and argue, however, is that the difficulty of the style and structure of Nietzsche's writings are *conducive* to the many readings of his work. To be sure, different times will interpret in different ways, no matter how unified the message of a text may be. Yet, with Nietzsche the message itself is ambiguous, and in contrast to most other texts, poses questions about its own validity.

The prism: Three attitudes towards inconsistence as reflections of an underlying methodological stance

This first chapter entails an examination of some of the basic and more theoretical tenets of Nietzsche interpretation. I will explore the specificity of Nietzsche's philosophy, and will attempt to establish, through the critics, the nature and validity of a number of its apparent contradictions. I will be mainly concerned with three different attitudes towards these contradictions: the first is adopted by those who dismiss contradictions and focus on what stands undisputed, the second by critics for whom contradictions in Nietzsche are the necessary steps towards a theory which for the most part remains hidden, and the third, finally, by thinkers for whom Nietzsche's ambivalence is somehow indicative of his philosophical message. Whereas the first group of interpreters may uphold the criteria of unity and clarity in assessing his philosophy, the second argues that textual and thematic coherence need to be intricately established by the expert eye. The third holds that his philosophy, through the ambivalence of style, questions the validity of these very criteria. For the second group Nietzsche's ambivalence is not even so much intended, but is rather indicative of a struggle for truth which Nietzsche gradually realizes cannot be reached. For the third his ambivalence is intended.

Thus André Gide, as an early representative of the first camp of critics, dismisses Nietzsche's concept of eternal recurrence as something which just simply does not make sense: "Nietzsche again. (..) Nothing more incomprehensible or useless than this proposition. It does not add anything to Nietzsche's system, and I can only understand the degree of enthusiasm that he has for it as a symptom of his approaching madness" (Lang 115).[3]

It should be noted here perhaps that modernist authors generally focus on the *Birth of Tragedy*, which is straightforward in approach and style. Modernists may consider Nietzsche as ungraspable at times, yet this sense of complexity does not prevent these authors from defining his work in terms of a consistent whole. They approach his thought as a coherent and practical philosophy of life, that is, a theory which may defy description, but which is always to be assessed on the basis of its consistency.[4]

Longinus Dohmen, a more recent representative of the second camp of critics, defines

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[3] The quote is taken from Renée Lang: *André Gide et la pensée allemande* (Paris: Egloff, 1949), and reads: "Nietzsche encore (..) Rien de plus gratuit, de plus vain qu'une telle hypothèse. Elle n'ajoute rien au système de Nietzsche, et je ne puis prendre la sorte d'enthousiasme qu'il en éprouve, que comme un signe de sa naissante folie" (115).

[4] Foster argues in *Heirs to Dionysus: A Nietzschean Current in Literary Modernism* that Gide's (and Mann's) interest in Nietzsche "was based largely on the *Birth of Tragedy*" (146): "In 1899, Gide could write that *Birth* epitomized Nietzsche's whole philosophy -"all of his future writings are there in germ"- and many years later, in a retrospective on his life-long fascination with Nietzsche that appeared in 1947, Mann closely echoed this judgment. In its main outlines, Nietzsche's thought "was completely there from the beginning, was always the same, and (...) not only the germs of his later teaching" but the entire doctrine was already present in early writings that included *Birth*" (146).

Nietzsche's philosophy in terms of a "veiled theory" (*een verborgen leer*), a set of principles to be discovered by the expert eye of the accurate interpreter. For Dohmen, contradictions and ambiguities may exist, yet they do not preclude a generally consistent theory behind the surface of ambivalence. In fact, ambivalence in Nietzsche may have different reasons, the foremost being perhaps simply the struggle with defining reality over time. Style and content are indicative of the pain with which Nietzsche not just attempted to, but actually succeeded in, elaborating his theory. Typical of Dohmen's systematic approach to contradictions is the following quote:

> The fact that [Nietzsche] at one time attributes sensation, at an other intelligence to force [and drive], while both rejecting and subsequently acknowledging these qualities again afterwards, reflects his doubts about these distinctions (266).[5]

Yet, for Dohmen doubts do not preclude a final resolution and stand: Nietzsche's uncertainty at this particular point simply demonstrates the difficulty of the problem, and the contentious nature of the argument he makes. Yet, the argument is ultimately not that ambivalence is inevitable, but that drives and forces are intelligent. Dohmen's method of interpretation is an elaborate study of the changes in emphasis, subtle differences that can be revealed by "a progressive condensation of [the] different contexts" in which the problematic notions are used.[6] The method is thus an accurate instrument in establishing the final emphasis in Nietzsche's theory.

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[5] The quote reads: "Uit het feit dat [Nietzsche] nu eens gewaarwording, dan weer intelligentie aan de kracht toekent, dan weer beide afwijst om ze vervolgens beide weer toe te kennen, blijkt zijn onzekerheid over deze kwalitatieve bepalingen" (266).

Beyond these two types of criticism, a third then argues that ambiguity in Nietzsche is intended. The difficulty of interpretation does not reflect the failure of the text, but rather that of the conditions of interpretation itself. David Allison argues that Nietzsche's writing contains "this kind of fertility or richness that refuses to be systematized, discretely categorized, and, ultimately, calcified by some ruse or device of language, some simple definition, or essence, or form" (xiv). Nietzsche's textual ambiguity reveals interpretation as the forceful attempt to establish a system and categories, precisely because the text so obviously lacks and resists these deceptive qualities. Nietzsche's text, then, is like a mirror in which the ardent interpreter sees reflected not the truth, but his or her own metaphysical longing for truth. Allison further states that

> [n]owhere (...) has the style of a philosopher's expression so forcefully reflected its content (xiii).

Style and content fuse in a "profusion" of thought without system to indicate the human impossibility to grasp what is real, or to objectively know any underlying system.

These three approaches to Nietzsche's philosophy may not always be so clearly defined, yet what they do indicate are the extremes on the large scale of responses to his philosophy. As said, while the first type of criticism tends to discard or ignore that which remains ambiguous in favour of a coherent system, the second holds that ambiguities indicate crucial turning points in a largely consistent experiment that evolved over time. For the third, then, ambiguity itself is part of Nietzsche's message and strategy.

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[6] Dohmen speaks of Nietzsche's notion of power: "Langzaam maar zeker wordt duidelijk, niet op de laatste plaats vanwege een geleidelijke verdichting van deze verschillende contexten, waar het accent komt te liggen en welke functie het machtsbegrip in Nietzsches filosofie krijgt toebedeeld" (296).

It is not my intention to take sides in this debate, not at this stage at least. What I will indicate, however, is that the way in which the critics of the different categories have approached Nietzsche's philosophy tells us as much about these critics as about Nietzsche himself. Interpretation (of Nietzsche's writing especially) is never just making apparent an underlying, stable meaning: interpretation is making ideologically motivated choices about the status and value of Nietzsche that often fit the way in which one understands the world oneself. In fact, Nietzsche himself somewhat provocatively argues that interpretation equals appropriation: one can only understand that which is already somehow known. And, ultimately, making something one's own may be nothing more than the structuring of meaning according to a set of preestablished givens.

In the following section, I will be focusing on some of the complexities in Nietzsche's writing, such as concepts, style and structure, and will attempt to relate these to the three approaches to contradictions. Each of these difficulties will thus be considered not just in themselves, but also as indicators of methodological and strategical choices made by the different interpreters. Nietzsche will be primarily used then as a prism carefully positioned under the interpreter's beam of light. The different configurations reveal as much about the source of the beam as about the prism itself.

The third chapter, an extension of the present, will focus on one of the concepts that has always resisted identification in Nietzsche's writing: the Dionysian. I will consider this notion, which has intrigued critics at all times, to be representative of Nietzsche's writing itself. The Dionysian will thus also be the prism through which the different interpretations reveal the interpreter's methodological stance.

The concepts:
The self-consumption of Magnus, Stewart and Mileur

One of the most interesting problems in Nietzsche's philosophy is that of understanding his concepts. The concepts stand for his entire philosophy in that they too resist precise identification. This perhaps not even so much because of their complexity, as because of the uncertainty about how to approach them. The concepts are rather fluid in that they can be understood at different levels and different degrees of complexity. The various interpretations may somehow complement each other, yet their exact relation is often only established with difficulty. Thus the Dionysian, for instance, is sometimes explained (both by Nietzsche and his commentators) in terms of knowledge and experience: knowledge of something like the ultimate truth; experience of, for instance, sexual intoxication. It is said to be identical to both rapture and play, both the abyss and the experience of the abyss. Though freely translated, Eugen Fink speaks of the Dionysian in terms of a "panic-stricken ecstatic awareness" of life (188).[7] Dionysus may also stand for both Nietzsche and his

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[7] The full quote reads: "Das dionysische Gipfelglück des Menschen liegt in der panischen Erfahrung, die uns die Nichtigkeit alles individuierten Gestalten kundgibt, das Individuelle in das Geschehen des Individuationsspieles zurücknimmt" (*Nietzsches Philosophie*, Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln, Mainz: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1973).

Übermensch, and sometimes his whole philosophy in its practice is termed a Dionysian philosophy. John Sallis' words of introduction to his "Dionysus --In Excess of Metaphysics" (Krell and Wood 3-12) are indicative of this type of ambivalence and complexity that surrounds the Nietzschean Dionysus. He states:

> I shall be concerned with a figure, one that is different from most, perhaps from almost all, others; a figure drawn, or rather withdrawn, in such a manner that it can have no direct image, even though, on the other hand, it can become, in its way, manifest. This figure could be considered the most perfectly metaphysical, the original *an sich*, so compactly an original, so thoroughly *an sich*, as to withhold itself from direct disclosure in an image (3).

In *Apollinisch and Dionysisch: Geschichte eines genialen Irrtums*, Martin Vogel refers in much the same fashion to the Dionysian as containing an element that resists understanding. Vogel emphasizes that since its introduction by Nietzsche the concept "immediately prove[s] to be unclear" (254), and he draws the comparison with a "badly forged coin":

> Das Wort 'dionysisch' ist einer schlecht geprägten Münze vergleichbar. Es gehört nicht zu den Worten, die sich erst nach längerem Gebrauch abgeschliffen haben und unscharf wurden. Es zählt auch nicht zu den Worten, denen in der Umgangssprache ein neuer Sinn unterlegt wurde. Erst durch Nietzsche kam das Wort 'dionysisch' in die Umgangssprache und erwies sich sogleich als einer jener unscharfen Begriffe, mit denen man sich nicht verständlich machen kann (254).

> [The word 'dionysian' can be compared to a badly forged coin. It

> does not belong to those words that have lost their precision after a long usage. It does not figure either among those words that received a new meaning through everyday speech. Only through Nietzsche the word 'dionysian' became part of everyday speech, and proved immediately to be one of those vague concepts which remain largely unintelligible.]

The faceless Dionysian, though as a concept not necessarily inconsistent, defies a quick understanding on the interpreter's part.

This observation may very well apply to Nietzsche interpretation in general: though the interpretations may move into the same direction, the actual elaboration takes place on totally different levels. Thus Magnus, Stewart and Mileur, in their *Nietzsche's Case*, refer to what they call the "self-consuming" quality of the concepts of eternal recurrence and the ideal life (*Übermensch*), which they consider to be "two of Nietzsche's most significant and dramatic self-consuming notions." Not the Dionysian this time, but:

> (...) eternal recurrence is central to his philosophical project. It is the generating thought of his *Zarathustra*, the thought which most divides commentators (25).

It is interesting to see that their description of the self-consuming quality echoes both Vogel's and Sallis' (rather paradoxical) explanation of the faceless figure of the Dionysian:

> The recognition (..) that a given self-consuming concept requires as a condition of its intelligibility the very contrast it wishes to set aside or would have us set aside is not the recognition of a flaw, a lack, or an absence. It is rather the recognition that the concept entails its own negation, in a special sense, the recognition of which, in turn,

is a negation of the negation (25).

The almost casually inserted specifications "in its way" (Sallis) and "in a special sense" (Magnus et al.) indicate that one cannot understand either the Dionysian or eternal recurrence from a conventional perspective only. Understanding or appreciating these concepts seems to require a special, unconventional way in which to approach them. It is as if the concepts themselves were riddles that can be solved on different levels of complexity, yet that render their deepest meaning only when approached from the highest.

Thus Nietzsche's concepts are not just difficult to understand because of this complexity;they generate for these critics an inherently paradoxical interpretive situation: they fall back upon themselves, or *consume* themselves when subjected to the analytic gaze of the interpreter (Magnus, Stewart and Mileur make a qualitative distinction between paradox and self-consumption: while the former loses its attraction through exposure, the latter retains it). Eternal recurrence, for instance, suffers not just from the fact that it can be understood on different levels (a cosmological/metaphysical version in which everything will literally recur the way it was, and a normative one in which human beings are asked to act as if this recurrence *were* true), but understanding is especially hampered in that its intelligibility depends on the "condition it wishes to set aside" (26). The writers argue that

> [a] closer look at the cosmological version (...) reveals rather quickly that the concept of eternal recurrence requires a notion of linear time to distinguish a specific configuration from its recurrence --the very mundane conception of time the doctrine allegedly contests and displaces (26).

The explanation may be as complex as the theory itself, yet at stake is the practical possibility of the concepts themselves. It is impossible to understand eternal recurrence of the same without preestablishing a concept that the theory wishes to negate --a linear definition of time. *Re*currence means that things will happen the way they have before, yet speaking in terms of a repetition implies linear progression. Magnus, Stewart and Mileur argue that it would be better to speak of occurrence of the exact same but this concept of one, single temporal circle defies any conception of time with which we are familiar. In its normative version, that is, acting as if everything were to recur, eternal recurrence is no less mind dazzling: "behaving as if recurrence were true entails behaving as if this moment not only will recur again but actually has recurred" (26). The interpreter seems to be trapped here: "One can only act as if recurrence were true if one believes that in a previous recurrence one behaved as if it were true, and so on ad infinitum" (27).

The paradoxical quality of eternal recurrence will be pushed even further. Craving nothing more than the unaltered repetition of everything that has happened in one's life before is simply the acknowledgement of being utterly human, the desire to be nothing else than what one already is. But this should be desired in the full knowledge that any other alternative could have been possible had the circumstances been different. Significantly enough, the authors ask themselves whether this desire can still be called human: it may very well be *super*human in that it is something one can imagine only. In a striking passage, the authors warn that the task of wanting nothing more fervently than the eternal recurrence of the same may be humanly impossible, and that its candid affirmation is often all too naive[8]:

> (...) imagine or recall for one moment the most entirely satisfactory sexual experience of your life, the moment in which you preferred your beloved to any possible alternative beloveds, a moment in which you also urgently preferred to be the lover you were just then. Imagine further that, upon reflection, you would welcome the eternal recurrence of that experience, just as it is, without addition, subtraction, or remainder. Let us say of this unconditionally cherished sexual ecstasy --real or imagined, it does not matter which- that you desired it for its own sake. Now also imagine, in contrast, the moment of your deepest despair, or the searing pain of your most unfulfilled longing, or the shattering blow of your most ruinous humiliation, or the self-deceptive acid of your most secret envy. Finally, if you can, imagine having just the same attitude toward the catalogued moments of your greatest anguish that you were asked to imagine of your most cherished sexual ecstasy or fantasy. Just *that* is what Nietzsche's eternal recurrence requires of each and every moment wanted for its own sake, it seems to us, and just *that* is what turns this requirement itself into a self-consuming human impossibility, a conceptual and existential oxymoron. It ought to give pause to those who think that Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence taught us to "celebrate" each moment: *carpe diem* (29).

We might establish already now that the difficulty of the Nietzschean concept resides in its illogicality. Eternal recurrence, for instance, lacks logical understanding when scrutinized by the analytical eye. As previously indicated, the difficulty of understanding and interpreting the concepts is intensified by the lack of a clear distinction between the concepts themselves: they all too often seem freely interchangeable.

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[8] The authors state: "what sort of creature could live its life under this description? For what sort of creature would this be its defining disposition? What sort of creature would desire the unaltered repetition of its exact life (...) would prefer each and every moment of its life just as it is, and would prefer this to any alternative possibility it could imagine?" (Magnus et al 28-9)

Thus eternal recurrence as knowledge is intricately related to Nietzsche's superhuman being, and this notion in turn is related to will to power and the Dionysian. The notions do not just consume themselves but also their counterparts in that each of them somehow competes to represent Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole. The Dionysian, in this context, can be said to represent the Übermensch's unconditional affirmation of eternal recurrence in a world ruled by the will to power.

Interpreters indicate different points of centrality and generally give priority to one of the concepts. Thus, as previously observed, while Sallis' defines the figure of Dionysus as "different from most, perhaps from almost all, others" (3), Magnus, Stewart and Mileur consider eternal recurrence as "central to his philosophic project (the thought which most divides commentators)"(25). The hyperbole must surely be the characteristic feature of both Nietzsche and his interpreters! The point one should also make, however, is that the distinction between the figure of Dionysus and the concept of eternal recurrence is not at all self-evident. Magnus and his colleagues, in their introduction on Nietzsche's paradoxical style, do not speak of the Dionysian in terms of a self-consuming concept, even though they could have done this, in my view, with a similar degree of conviction. In one of their Nietzsche quotes (which is an unpublished entry from the Förster-Nietzsche edition and for this and others reasons is dismissed by the authors), the Dionysian figures within the range of Nietzsche's most important concepts:

> This world (...) a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back, with tremendous years

> of recurrence, with an ebb and a flood of its forms; out of the simplest forms striving toward the most complex, out of the stillest, most rigid, coldest forms toward the hottest, most turbulent, most self-contradictory, and then again returning home to the simple out of this abundance, out of the play of contradiction back to the joy of concord, still affirming itself in this uniformity of its courses and its years, blessing itself as that which must return eternally, as a becoming that knows no satiety, no disgust, no weariness: this, my *Dionysian* world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying, this mystery world of the twofold voluptuous delight, my "beyond good and evil," without goal, unless the joy of the circle is itself a goal; without will, unless a ring feels good will toward itself --do you want a name for this world? A *solution* for all its riddles? A *light* for you too, you best-concealed, strongest, most intrepid, most midnightly men? --*This world is the will to power -and nothing besides!* And you yourselves are also this will to power --and nothing besides! (41)[9]

This quote here is significant for several reasons, especially for our argument in that in it Nietzsche lumps together the key-concepts of his philosophy.[10] Will to power figures as the all-inclusive and central notion of the quote, yet it remains without any clear distinction from the Dionysian, eternal recurrence, or even the Übermensch. Ultimately, all concepts are equal in a reductive move towards will to power, which, again, as a concept remains largely unintelligible without the support of its counterpart notions.

Thus to conclude this section one can establish that the indeterminacy of the concepts takes place on many different levels: the concepts can be understood in different ways, and the argument here has been that in each of these occasions they defy our logical thinking. One of the implications of this might be that if a logical approach to these concepts is nonetheless forced, the interpretation will be a distorted one. To this logical inconsistency, I have added Nietzsche's confusing blend of his main figures, which leaves the interpreter with the free choice of attributing centrality to either one of them. There can be no agreement as to what the concepts precisely entail. The concepts are thus like mirrors in which one sees reflected, because of the inability to make them consistent, the interpreter's own methodological approach and stance.

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[9] I am rendering Nietzsche's quotation as it appears in Magnus, Stewart and Mileur.

[10] Magnus, Stewart and Mileur mainly use this entry as indicative of Nietzsche's discussion of will to power as a cosmology or ontology, but they also point out --and this is their argument-- that ultimately Nietzsche chose not to publish it. For their discussion it is important to understand that for them Nietzsche's references to a cosmology (in relation to his concept of will to power) in his published work are scarce. (See 40-6). I have used the English translation of the Nietzsche quote.

This must also apply then to Magnus, Stewart and Mileur themselves. The self-consuming characteristic of the Nietzschean concept gives way to a Nietzsche who ultimately wishes to convey nothing else than precisely these self-consuming truths. Style and thought fuse for these writers in one, relatively clear, message (though the message is one of many voices) that "there is no point in asking about the way the world is in itself apart from what we make of it" (46). The plurality of competing messages cancels out the supremacy of a single one. Nietzsche for them, though perhaps not in so many words, can be "usefully situate[d]" as the "first full-blooded postmodern, nonrepresentational thinker" (37), who "seems (...) to have abandoned the will to power and eternal recurrence as ontological principles," and for whom the "*Übermensch* was perhaps not to be construed as yet another version of the human ideal" (37).

Style and Thought: Jaspers and Derrida: Transcendence and Joke

Nietzsche's style and thought are considered to be as problematic as his concepts. If for some critics his fragmented style has always been an impediment to his real thought, later critics have proposed that the way in which his texts are composed is intricately related to their content. For Magnus, Stewart and Mileur, Nietzsche's case in fact challenges this traditional distinction between the text and the thought it expresses:

> The case of Nietzsche may be marshalled to complicate [the traditional philosophical notion that thought and its embodiment mark contrasts that go all the way down], by pointing out features of his style which are not easily detached from the thought they express --perhaps cannot be detached from it. (...) Perhaps it is better to understand 'philosophical' writing as subject to and emerging out of the experience and the exigencies of writing itself rather than to understand graphemes as the vehicle for the expression of antecedent philosophical 'ideas' (34).

For these critics, Nietzsche's writing demonstrates that thought and ideas do not precede texts, but that they are inscribed within the composition and form of the texts themselves. There is no other thought in Nietzsche than that expressed by the whole body of texts and subtexts.

In this respect, Karl Jaspers, in his introduction to his work on Nietzsche, draws the comparison between Nietzsche's philosophy and the ruins of a building, one that Nietzsche may have attempted to erect, yet never fully succeeded in completing.[11] For Jaspers, the one who reconstructs may establish the 'spirit' of the possible construction, but never the actual thing itself, precisely because the building as a "complete, single, and unambiguous whole" has never existed. There is only the "structure which fell to pieces," and Nietzsche's thought resides in this fallen structure --and not in the potential building. Nietzsche's thought is nothing other than the tentatively structured pile of rocks of a construction he only attempted to erect:

> The appearance which Nietzsche's work presents can be expressed (...) as though a mountain wall had been dynamited; the rocks, already more or less shaped, convey the idea of a whole. But the building for the sake of which the dynamiting seems to have been done has not been erected. However, the fact that the work lies about like a heap of ruins does not appear to conceal its spirit from the one who happens to have found the key to the possibilities of construction. (...) The task seems to demand a search throughout the ruins for the building, even though the latter will not reveal itself to anybody as a complete, single, and unambiguous whole. The search for what is thus hidden can succeed only if the searcher proceeds as though he himself had to erect the structure which fell to pieces while Nietzsche was working on it. (...) We must (...) understand Nietzsche in his entirety through Nietzsche himself by giving serious attention to each word without allowing any word, considered separately, to limit our vision. (...) [W]e must experience both the systematic possibilities and their collapse (3,4).[12]

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[11] Karl Jaspers: *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1965 (Translated by Charles F. Wallraff and Frederick J. Schmitz). I will render the quotes in English.

[12] The German original quotation is in Jaspers: *Nietzsche: Einführung in das Verständnis seines Philosophierens* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1950, Dritte unveränderte Auflage), p. 9, 10.

For Jaspers, "self-contradiction is the fundamental ingredient in Nietzsche's thought," yet, much like Magnus, Stewart and Mileur, Jaspers argues that the contradictions are part of his philosophy and not the unhappy side-effect of an otherwise consistent theory. Contradictions for Jaspers reveal a deeper level of being, just the same as focussing on the consistency of the single parts that make up the contradiction remains inevitably superficial. Understanding in terms of establishing consistency by dismissing either one of the contradiction's alternative parts is breaking down the unfamiliar into familiar components, and, thus, according to Jaspers, a "simplification of being" (10). Jaspers appeals to a different understanding of Nietzsche, focussed not on the dismissal of contradictions, but on the acknowledgement that their presence is a necessary outcome of Nietzsche's quest for truth. The contradictions in fact constitute an integral part of an altogether different truth. For Jaspers, self-contradiction in Nietzsche is a sign of honesty in that it makes the acquisition of the merely conventional and final truth, which after all is a misleading simplification, problematic. Nietzsche's domain is the inexpressible and the formless, and the contradiction is simply the means to arrive at these truths:

> In the end, the contradictory elements and circles in the movements of Nietzsche's thought are simply the means to touch indirectly upon what lies beyond form, law, and the expressible. Nothing can be at this boundary, and yet everything must be there (155).[13]

Nietzsche's philosophy, while pushing Jasper's analogy of the exploded wall into rocks, may be compared to this formless labyrinthine construction: though still somehow a building, it lacks the familiar contours, style and function of one. And yet, again, in its formlessness it is the most direct reflection of being one can obtain. Jaspers' half-speculative note on contradiction and the unveiling of being reads as follows:

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[13] *Ibid*, p. 154.

> But it could also be that we have [in Nietzsche's case] to do with contradictions that are necessary and inescapable. Perhaps the contradictories, presented as alternatives and appearing reasonable and familiar to the reader when considered singly, actually are misleading simplifications of being. If the understanding (...) per se is condemned, as it were, to remain on the surface of being, then being may have to become manifest through self-contradiction. This would certainly seem to be true for those who search passionately for the final truth but think only with the understanding and are limited to what is accessible to it. A contradiction arising in this way would be necessitated by the subject-matter; it would be a sign of truthfulness rather than of incompetent thinking (10).[14]

A perfect example of this complexity through contradiction is Nietzsche's "will to pure this-worldliness," which as a strategy must culminate in exactly that which Nietzsche most vehemently wishes to reject: transcendence. Jaspers argues that the difficulty with Nietzsche's metaphysics is that it "never really relates to determinate, specific beings within the world":

> the referent of his thought, insofar as it is not to be confused with any determinate object within the world, actually amounts to transcendence, although verbally it refers to absolutized immanence

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[14] *Ibid*, p. 17.

(431).

For Jaspers, though, "[man's limited existence] cannot fulfill itself without transcendence": man must constantly forget "the nature of being and of himself" (430). In this way, then, the contradiction in Nietzsche's thought is in reality not an inconsistency: it merely demonstrates the human inability to purely focus on a world of immanence.

> If the regnant directive in Nietzsche's thought is the attainment in actuality of the highest and best that is possible for man without God, nevertheless, Nietzsche, in spite of himself and without being aware of it, shows decisively that the limited existence of man cannot fulfill itself without transcendence. The negation of transcendence brings about its own reappearance. It appears to thought in falsifying constructions of substitutes and to the authentic self in a still uncomprehended shattering confrontation of true transcendence in opposition to false. Nietzsche's nobility and honesty, in a time of apparently universal godlessness, produce in him the restive form of godlessness that, so far as we are able to discover, issues in the most extreme falsity of thought as well as the most genuine confrontation with transcendence (430).[15]

Self-deception goes back to the very basics of Nietzsche's philosophy. Nietzsche's inconsistency is that ultimately his nihilism remains a "form of transcending" (435). Jaspers speaks of the "setting up of impossible tasks," such as the superman and the latter's ability to choose the "right time" of his own death. The "substance of the purely worldly impulse (...) becomes indefinite and disappears into a void" (432). The desire for immanence results in something that has lost its referent to the world: the attempt to "physically prove eternal recurrence," "to observe the will to power and life empirically," "to bring the superman into existence" all spring from the desire to arrive at the essence of our material world, a world which, again, has lost contact with anything determinate. The confusion and ambiguity of Nietzsche's style and thought are an expression of the difficulty and perhaps impossibility of separating the realm of pure immanence from that of transcendence. Jaspers states:

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[15] *Ibid*, p. 427.

> Confusion of the truth that can be investigated objectively with that which can only be elucidated, or confusion of the always relative knowledge of particular things in the world with transcending, results in ambiguity whenever transcending is expressed by means of the concepts of physical science or of psychology and sociology. (...) So (...) next to the passionate "*excelsior*" which his guiding types of higher men signify, we find neutralizing tendencies in the form of an insipid recognition of *homo natura*, and next to an appeal to overcome the psychological appears psychological leveling. The perverse confusion of fact-finding psychology with hortatory elucidation of *Existenz* derives in the end from a will to pure immanence that cannot but transcend constantly in spite of a determination to reject every kind of transcending (...) (433).[16]

At the root of this inconsistency in Nietzsche, Jaspers indicates the very human impossibility of doing without transcendence. Nietzsche's philosophy is based on a very human conflict: "[the] unbeliever's will to believe," "[the] thinker['s] [inability] to live with his own [far-stretching] conclusions," "the increasing agitation of a search for God that perhaps no longer understands itself." For Jaspers, there is no peace in Nietzsche's mind:

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[16] *Ibid*, p. 430-31.

"[h]is nihilistic transcending does not attain to peace within being" (435).[17] Nietzsche in this sense is the representative of all humanity:

> A man is only himself when he lives in relation to transcendence. Transcendence is the manner of appearance in existence through which alone man can confront the nature of being and of himself. The necessity is inescapable: when one disowns it some surrogate is bound to appear (430).[18]

This is where Jaspers must inevitably reveal his own ideological stance. In conformity with Heidegger's definition of Nietzsche as embodying the western metaphysical tradition in its most advanced stage, Jaspers defines Nietzsche's philosophy in terms of a "metaphysical doctrine" that investigates "being per se," and subsequently explains it in terms of "eternal recurrence," "will to power," "life" and "the superman." Yet, for Jaspers his philosophy is thus like a sublimated religion, in which "[t]he insight into [eternal] recurrence (...) has taken the place of belief in God," in which "will to power (...) furnishes the sole propulsion of becoming," "[life] is designated by the mythical symbol Dionysus" and "[t]he meaning of being is *the superman*" (430-1).[19] For Jaspers, Nietzsche's philosophy is a quest for the true essence of being, a quest which generates a truth, however, with which he cannot live. The empirical proof Nietzsche so desperately wishes to obtain to authenticate the different notions of his philosophy is indicative not just of Nietzsche's, but of man's imperative need for universals and certainties. True being for Jaspers, then, resides in that which Nietzsche cannot say but which he says nonetheless. The contradiction of his philosophy reveals that the human attempt at immanence must surrender to self-deception. For Jaspers, perceiving the world as pure immanence is impossible.

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[17] Jaspers provides a compelling example of Nietzsche's state of mind: "Nietzsche expresses his godlessness in a manner that conveys his unspeakable torment: Having to renounce God means that "you will never again pray, (...) never again find peace in boundless trust. You deny yourself the opportunity to come to rest before a final wisdom, a final goodness, and a final power, and to throw off the harness of your thoughts ... Man of renunciation, do you really choose to deny yourself all this? Who will give you the strength to do so? No one ever had *this* much strength!"" (436).

[18] *Einführung*, p. 427.

[19] The full quote reads: "His metaphysical doctrine tells us what that being per se, conceived as nothing but pure this-worldliness, actually is: Being is *the eternal recurrence of all things*. The insight into this recurrence, with its

Jacques Derrida in *Eperons/Spurs* may be said to take the inconsistency in Nietzsche's text to its logical extremes.[20] If for Jaspers the essence of Nietzsche's text resides in the belief in contradictions as true manifestations of being, Derrida explicitly poses the problem of the essence of the text itself. For Derrida, the style of Nietzsche's text is ruled by what he calls the "hymen's graphic," which as a protective discursive layer in its undecidable position between the author's giving and the interpreter's taking of the text, cannot be properly possessed. Derrida thus defines Nietzsche's text in terms of "that barely allegorical figure" (51) of woman, which incorporates this playful game of persistent dissimulation. Woman in Nietzsche plays with the metaphysics of truth ("A woman seduces from a distance" (49)). The essence and truth behind the Nietzschean text may be suggested, yet

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consequences for our awareness of being, our conduct, and our experiences, has taken the place of belief in God. Being is *will to power*; all that occurs is nothing but a mode of the will to power which in its endless appearances furnishes the sole propulsion of becoming. Being is *life*; it is designated by the mythical symbol, Dionysus. The meaning of being is *the superman*: "The beauty of the superman came to me like shade: what do I now care about --the gods!" (431).

[20] Quotes are taken from the French-English version published in1979 (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press).

ultimately the text always risks to negate that either truth or essence, either of the text itself or in general, exist. The text must thus disappear into a void, not just because of its multiple contradictions, but rather because of its overall resistance to a deeper meaning. Derrida defines Nietzsche's writing as inherently heterogeneous, implying that a deeper meaning exists only then when it is read into the text. Derrida writes:

> For [Nietzsche], truth is like a woman. (...) There is no such thing as the essence of woman because woman averts, she is averted of herself. Out of the depths, endless and unfathomable, she engulfs and distorts all vestige of essentiality, of identity, of property. And the philosophical discourse, blinded, founders on these shoals and is hurled down these depthless depths to its ruin. There is no such thing as the truth of woman, but it is because of that abyssal divergence of the truth, because that untruth is "truth" (51) (...) [The hymen's] graphic, which describes a margin where the control over meaning or code is without recourse, poses the limit to the relevance of the hermeneutic or systematic question (99).

For Derrida, not just the concepts, but the text as a whole consumes itself. If for Magnus, Stewart and Mileur (much like Jaspers) the truth of Nietzsche's text resides in the very fact that his concepts remain at bottom inconceivable (the truth Nietzsche thus means to convey is that there is no use in asking what either the world or his concepts ultimately represent), Derrida moves beyond this reductive interpretation by arguing that Nietzsche's text may not say anything at all --in fact, not even that it does not say anything. While focussing on one of the more cryptic "sample[s]" (*prélèvement*) taken from Nietzsche's unpublished manuscripts, Derrida goes on to say that:

> the hypothesis that the totality of Nietzsche's text, in some monstrous way, might well be of the type [of this cryptic sample with no decidable meaning] cannot be denied (133).[21]

For Derrida, Nietzsche's writing is inherently undecidable in that the text will always offer the possibility to stand in and by itself. It leaves the interpreter without any reassurance that the context will guide one in decisively establishing the text's meaning. Derrida indicates the haunting possibility of a text without depth: "detached (...) not only from the milieu that produced it, but also from any intention or meaning on Nietzsche's part":

> [w]hat if Nietzsche himself meant to say nothing, or at least not much of anything, or anything whatever? Then again, what if Nietzsche was only pretending to say something? (127).

The truth about Nietzsche is clear: "(...) there is no such thing either as the truth of Nietzsche, or of Nietzsche's text" (103). The secret of Nietzsche's writing "is (...) the possibility that indeed it might have no secret, that it might only be pretending to be simulating some hidden truth within its folds" (133). As mentioned before, Derrida considers Nietzsche's texts as fractured: "there is no 'totality to Nietzsche's text,' not even a fragmentary or aphoristic one" (135). It should be noted that Derrida abstains from using the word

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[21] Derrida focuses on the following fragment: "I have forgotten my umbrella." Derrida's quote reads: "For it is always possible that the "I have forgotten my umbrella," detached as it is, not only from the milieu that produced it, but also from any intention or meaning on Nietzsche's part, should remain so, whole and intact, once and for all, without any other context. The meaning and the signature that appropriates it remain in principle inaccessible (...). That inaccessibility though is not necessarily one of some hidden secret. It might just as easily be an inconsistency, or of no significance at all" (125). (See chapter six).

"fragment" to indicate the example that he holds as representative for the whole of Nietzsche's writing. He states: "[t]he concept of fragment (...), since its fracturedness is itself an appeal to some totalizing complement, is no longer sufficient "(125). Instead, Derrida refers to words such as "prélèvement," "non-fragment" and "simulacre" to describe the isolated excerpt, and, since the excerpt represents the text itself, the text as a whole. "Prélèvement" refers to a sample (much like a blood sample), which is a small amount taken from a substance, the nature of which is still to be determined. Yet, as observed, the sample, as a non-fragment and simulacrum, resists identification.

Derrida holds that if the text and Nietzsche escape metaphysics, this happens more by default than through intent: "[the] inability to assimilate (...) the aphorisms and the rest --perhaps it must simply be admitted that Nietzsche himself did not see his way too clearly there." The text surpasses the author: "Nietzsche might well be a little lost in the web of his text, lost much as a spider who finds he is unequal to the web he has spun" (101).

No less in Derrida's case, however, Nietzsche is used here to make a partisan statement. Derrida's text itself escapes the traditional interpretive approach of hermeneutics in that it lays no claims to either the meaning of Nietzsche or of itself. Just as Nietzsche's, and in fact any text, Derrida's own disappears into a void, a chaos of meanings in which Nietzsche's words constantly fuse with those of Derrida (*Spurs* is sometimes confusing as far as the identity of the speaker is concerned). What for Derrida remains valid for both Nietzsche and himself, is the disquieting possibility of text as a parody and farcical joke, followed and to be followed by nothing but "[this] enormous clap of laughter":

> And still the text (*Spurs*) will remain, if it is really cryptic and parodying (and I tell you that it is so through and through. I might as well tell you since it won't be of any help to you. Even my admission can very well be a lie because there is dissimulation only if one tells the truth, only if one tells that one is telling the truth), still the text will remain indefinitely open, cryptic and parodying (137).

Less disquieting, in this context, is a type of Nietzsche interpretation which leaves Nietzsche still very much in control of what he says (it is yet another approach to the inconsistency of Nietzsche's style, but in its attempt to leave the creative authority in Nietzsche's own hands, different from Jaspers and Derrida). Babette Babich, for instance, in her article on "Post-Nietzschean Postmodernism," (Koelb 250-66), speaks of Nietzsche's inconsistency in terms of a "precociously postmodern compositional technique" in that the text expresses a "smooth harmony of disparate or dissonant themes" (252). She speaks of an ironic quality in Nietzsche's writing which both wants to cover and uncover, --both to 'say' and 'unsay': "The ironic trope is nothing less than what Nietzsche named the artistic truth of illusion in its subsistent unsaying of what it says." Babich relates what she calls at other times Nietzsche's 'concinnity' to Charles Jencks 'double coding' or Umberto Eco's 'postmodern attitude' (as elaborated in his "Post-script to the Name of the Rose"): Nietzsche's final embrace of that which he has previously dissected and rejected finds its resonance in Eco's ironic recovery of the stereotype. Babich calls it the "coded coding" or the "having it both ways":

> Both Nietzschean concinnity and what Jencks has called double coding name the same thing. Both testify to the *doomed* reflective

> attempt to both do/say something and not to do/say that thing. This coded coding, this having it both ways or, better, this knowing better but going along anyway, embodies the only style of life-election remaining for the postmodern times Eco names the "age of lost innocence." The ironic tactic of affirming/subverting one's circumstantial sophistication by exposing its inadequacy while yet trading on its inevitable necessity operates in both Nietzsche's style and what Lyotard, Eco, Jameson, Jencks, and others name the (commercially Las Vegan) postmodern (Koelb 257).

Babich's reference to Eco and Jencks clearly shows that for her this inconsistency is intended, that it is part of a new, postmodern or ironic type of philosophy based on the premise of acknowledging the impossibility of that which is stated nonetheless. Nietzsche's message is thus transformed (reduced or elevated depends on the stand one takes) into this ironic wink which expresses the possibility of truth only while stating its impossibility at the same time. Nietzsche ultimately creates his own grand narrative, but this can only take place after he has previously subverted the validity of metanarratives in general. Nietzsche does not believe in the illusion of truth, but believes in truth which is illusory. Thus, Nietzsche's technique resounds in Eco's observation that the "past is to be revisited with irony, not with innocence" (253). Nietzsche's inconsistency may then be paradoxical for Babich, but it is not necessarily contradictory. The wink is that which she calls the "concinnity" of his style in that it "describes syn-phony, that is, the smooth harmony of disparate or dissonant themes," an ultimately unified message resulting from a philosophy that exposes its own limitations. For Babich, ultimately everything must be message, even the message that disclaims its own status as a message.

And with Babich's resolving paradox, we may attempt a short synthesis of the different approaches to Nietzsche's style: as already observed, if Jaspers and Derrida consider Nietzsche's style and composition to be the necessary outcome of something (to the order of a text, web, system, or philosophy) over which he has little control, Babich (and also interpreters such as Magnus, Stewart and Mileur) defines inconsistency as orchestrated and only apparent. The interesting paradox here is that although for Babich, Magnus, Stewart and Mileur Nietzsche constitutes the first representative of the postmodern tradition ("the Nietzsche who speaks with many voices" (Magnus 46)), they still hold on to a Nietzsche who conveys a unified message, even if the message is one of plurality. For Magnus, Stewart and Mileur Nietzsche stands at the head of "that philosophical genealogy which says that there is no ultimate contrast to mark genealogy off from ontology, no point in asking about the way the world is in itself apart from what we make of it" (46).[22]

Jaspers speaks more explicitly of the essence in Nietzsche, though the essence for Jaspers resides in that which Nietzsche knows but does not realize, in what he may think but cannot say. Derrida's interpretation distinguishes itself precisely in its attempt to preclude any essence whatsoever in Nietzsche's texts. There may exist a plurality of essence and truth in Nietzsche, yet ultimately none can be said to have prevalence over the other. The presence of the "hymen's graphic" implies that neither Nietzsche (as woman), the text, nor the interpreter have the possibility of decisively establishing meaning.

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[22] Perhaps this is making Nietzsche into a descendant of Voltaire: his philosophy defined in terms of a rather extreme pragmatism must inspire one to hold on to the 'cultivating of one's garden' as the only solution to life that remains true after all is said and done. And defining Nietzsche in terms of someone who holds these truths, even if it is the truth of non-truth, is implying that the essence of his philosophy must reside in this piece of practical wisdom.

The structure and composition: split versus lump

It is clear that nothing has fuelled more the controversy over Nietzsche's writing than the complexity of its structure and composition. To define his writing in terms of a 'structure' or 'composition' might already be saying too much, since the question among his interpreters is often precisely whether Nietzsche did in fact structure or compose his texts in the traditional sense.

With Nietzsche, the questions of interpretation have a rigorous tendency to fall back upon themselves in that they expose the assumptions underlying the very question itself. Some things, however, stand undisputed. It has been observed by many interpreters many times before: his work consists of a large number of texts which are very different in nature. The corpus is divided into sections that Nietzsche published himself, intended to publish or did not publish at all, and in its totality it resists categorization according to genre and style.

Yet, what is less known is that Nietzsche himself provides us with a perfectly clear (and even physiological) explanation of this heterogeneous quality of his work. He states himself that his philosophy is nothing more (or nothing less) than the result of alternating drives inevitably driven to acquire a temporary supremacy. Philosophy for Nietzsche is a far cry from the search for objective truth or unity: the philosopher's quest, as merely an expression of the temporarily prevalent drive within the philosopher him- or herself, thus equals autobiography more than anything else:

> es giebt auch bei den großen Philosophen diese Unschuld: sie sind sich nicht bewußt, *daß sie von sich reden* --sie meinen, es handle sich 'um die Wahrheit' --aber es handelt sich im Grunde um sie. Oder vielmehr: der in ihnen gewaltigste Trieb bringt sie an's Licht,

> mit der größten Schamlosigkeit und Unschuld eines Grundtriebes -- *er* will Herr sein und womöglich der Zweck aller Dinge, alles Geschehens! Der Philosoph ist nur eine Art Gelegenheit und Ermöglichung dafür, daß der *Trieb einmal zum Reden kommt.*[23]

About the reasons behind the many "detours" of his own philosophy, Nietzsche states that it too is nothing more than the translation into words of a strong, prevailing drive:

> *Auf Umwegen.* --Wohin will diese ganze Philosophie mit allen ihren Umwegen? Tut sie mehr, als einen steten und starken Trieb gleichsam in Vernunft zu übersetzen, einen Trieb nach milder Sonne, heller und bewegter Luft, südlichen Pflanzen, Meeres-Atem, flüchtiger Fleisch-, Eier- und Früchtenahrung, heißem Wasser zum Getränke, tagelangen stillen Wanderungen, wenigem Sprechen, seltenem und vorsichtigem Lesen, einsamen Wohnen, reinlichen, schlichten und fast soldatischen Gewohnheiten, kurz, nach allen Dingen, die gerade mir am besten schmecken, gerade mir am zuträglichsten sind? Eine Philosophie, welche im Grunde der Instinkt für eine persönliche Diät ist? Ein Instinkt, welcher nach meiner Luft, meiner Höhe, meiner Witterung, meiner Art Gesundheit durch den Umweg meines Kopfes sucht?[24]

Though one understands, and to some extent can even agree with, Nietzsche's claim of philosophy as the ambiguous result of alternating drives driven to gain a temporary supremacy in the philosopher him- or herself, it should be acknowledged that Nietzsche's writing is definitely more cryptic than that of the average philosopher. One of the more intricate difficulties in Nietzsche criticism, for instance, is that of his split corpus. The controversy among many of his interpreters has been in the past and still is today over the question of the real Nietzsche and the body of texts in which this Nietzsche is to be found. If for some his published works should have the final say, others indicate that what he left behind contains his real preoccupations and intentions. Some maintain that these unpublished notes add nothing new to what is already said in the published works, while others argue that only these notes reflect the true development of his thought.

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[23] *KSA* 10, 7[62], 262/3.

[24] *Morgenröte*, 553.

An additional problem is the fraudulent compilation of notes on the will to power, which, as a fully coherent philosophy, was issued at the turn of the century under Nietzsche's name. The problem here according to some critics is that because the falsification had been identified early on, a number of critics dismissed Nietzsche's literary legacy as consisting of nothing other than speculative notes and hypotheses.

Others, in turn, have argued against this while insisting on the philosophical importance of these notes. At stake in this debate is often whether Nietzsche's concept of will to power stands at the centre of his philosophy. And if it does, this debate also asks whether he planned on writing a comprehensive and fully developed theory and book on the will to power. At stake is also the question of Nietzsche as a systematic philosopher, since acknowledging the importance of Nietzsche's *Nachlaß* has often implied the equal acknowledging of the will to power as central to his philosophy (and this, in turn, the perception of Nietzsche as a systematic and metaphysical thinker). As said, the controversy is well known, even though the methodological implications of each stance are much less discussed. In the following, I will briefly indicate two different approaches to the question of Nietzsche's unpublished material. I will also attempt to indicate for each of these cases the more general implications their choices have for the status and value of Nietzsche.

Dohmen, an example of what Magnus, Stewart and Mileur in their study somewhat pejoratively call "lumpers," considers Nietzsche's posthumous work of vital importance to the understanding of the way in which Nietzsche develops and arrives at his views on mankind and his notion of will to power. As mentioned before, Dohmen speaks of Nietzsche's philosophy in terms of a concealed anthropological theory, thus indicating that a consistently developed theory on the will to power and human nature operates behind the surface of a much more fragmented, and generally much less informing, published text. Dohmen argues that the difference between the published and unpublished material is that the latter develops more fully what the former often leaves unsaid. In this way, then, both bodies of texts deal with the same issues and are not necessarily contradictory. The difference generally lies in the way in which the material is presented. Dohmen states:

> Wanneer ik hier spreek over Nietzsches verborgen antropologie, doel ik op twee zaken: ten eerste op het feit dat Nietzsche belangrijke aspecten van zijn positieve visie op de mens in het gepubliceerde werk zo terloops en schijnbaar achteloos, op onverwachte plaatsen (bijvoorbeeld niet aan het begin van een boek of zelfs van een hoofdstuk) poneert, dat de lezer wel erg attent moet zijn om er niet aan voorbij te gaan. Zakelijk gezien belangrijke opmerkingen over wil, drift, bewustzijn, handeling, wil tot macht etc. worden bij Nietzsche zelden of nooit goed aangekondigd, vervolgens breedvoerig aan de orde gesteld en ten slotte, wat misschien het belangrijkste is, na ponering ook ruimschoots toegelicht. Daarmee kom ik op het tweede punt, het feit dat Nietzsche in zijn nagelaten werk veel uitvoeriger zijn visie op de mens uiteenzet en becommentarieert en in die zin zijn ideeën over de mens dus ook letterlijk heeft achtergehouden. Zijn visie op de mens is verborgen in die zin dat ze in het gepubliceerde werk alleen voor de ervaren lezer herkenbaar is, en dat zelfs aan hem de feitelijke uitwerking ervan in het gepubliceerde werk letterlijk onthouden wordt! (19)
>
> [When I am speaking here of Nietzsche's concealed anthropology, I mean to refer to two different matters. The first is that Nietzsche [postulates] important aspects of his more constructive outlook on human beings in his published works at unexpected places. And he

> does this in such a casual and seemingly thoughtless way (for example, not at the beginning of a book or even a chapter), that the reader has to be really very attentive in order not to just skip over them. Important observations as regards to content on issues such as the human will, the drives, consciousness, the human act, will to power, etc., are only rarely or even never properly introduced or discussed. And, finally, what is perhaps most important, they almost consistently remain without a proper explanation. And this is my second point: in his posthumous writings, Nietzsche develops and comments much more fully on his views of mankind, and in this sense, [he can be said to have] literally withheld his ideas on humanity. His outlook on humanity is concealed in the sense that only the experienced reader is able to recognize it in his published works, and in that the actual elaboration of this outlook in these published works is withheld even to this reader!]

It should be emphasized here perhaps that Dohmen does not necessarily express a preference for Nietzsche's unpublished literary estate. Both bodies of texts are obviously important. What he does say, however, is that Nietzsche's posthumous writings are much more explicit than the main texts, that they testify to a consistent development of the key concept in his philosophy (which is that of the "will to power"), and that, together with the published works, they contain a fully elaborated theory of the human drives and the forces that animate the universe in general. Dohmen, again, speaks of a "concealed" theory, precisely because the presentation of this theory in Nietzsche is never systematic. Dohmen is especially interesting because he attempts to avoid the methodological implications of his own interpretation: attributing centrality to the concept of the will to power (Dohmen consistently speaks of a plurality of 'wills'[25]) might situate him in the Heideggerian league of Nietzsche critics, something Dohmen explicitly wishes to avoid.[26]

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[25] Dohmen refers, for instance, to *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (entry: *Von der Selbst-Überwindung*) where Nietzsche speaks of wills in the plural. Dohmen maintains the plural designation throughout the study to counteract an 'essentialist' reading of the notion of will to power.

For Dohmen, the theory Nietzsche elaborates, in whichever form and at whichever place, is not a metaphysical theory in that it attempts to arrive at the essence of an everlasting reality. The theory (*leer*[27]) may be systematic, yet the system itself is not metaphysical. Will to power as a non-reducible entity does not exist, according to Dohmen's Nietzsche. There is merely a plurality of wills, which in themselves do not exist apart from each other. The relationships between the different wills may be established and re-established without end, yet the nature of the relationships themselves, and thus the identity of the different wills, is something that will always change. Dohmen states:

> Nietzsches 'onto*logie*' betreft een interpretatie van de veranderende werkelijkheid, op grond waarvan de wereld als een eeuwige, dynamische chaos wordt voorgesteld, die resulteert uit onderling per se samenhangende, tot tijdelijke, complexe eenheden verenigde veelheden van machtswillen (344).
>
> [Nietzsche's 'onto*logy*' is an interpretation of an ever-changing reality, on the basis of which the world is defined in terms of an eternal and dynamic chaos resulting from pluralities of wills to power which are inevitably inter-connected and [only] temporarily united into complex wills unities]

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[26] It should be noted, however, that Dohmen's point of departure is like Heidegger's (though Dohmen acknowledges this): "Deze studie over Nietzsches wijsgerige antropologie vertrekt van twee nauw samenhangende uitgangspunten: van de erkenning van de relevantie van het begrip 'wil tot macht'; en van het belang van een bepaalde onderzoekstraditie op dit punt. Nietzsche hoort tot de echte denkers en die hebben, aldus Heidegger in een pregnante formulering, slechts een *enkele* gedachte: 'Wie Nietzsche *is* en vooral: wie hij *zal zijn*, weten wij zodra wij in staat zijn om die gedachte te denken die hij in het samenstel van woorden "de wil tot macht" heeft uitgedrukt' (quote from Heidegger's *Nietzsche I*, 473) (16)."

[27] Dohmen uses the Dutch 'leer' (in German: 'die Lehre'), which is a 'teaching,' 'doctrine,' 'system,' etc. He also uses the words 'procesleer' and 'ontologie,' though the latter always in quotation marks (17).

Dohmen, though to a large degree focussing on what Nietzsche did not publish, argues that Nietzsche's *Nachlaß* is not necessarily motivated by a stronger desire for metaphysical essence. Dohmen defines Nietzsche's "ontology" (a designation he consistently writes in quotation marks) in terms of a plurality of wills to power, while indicating at the same time that Nietzsche himself speaks of his theory in terms of image and interpretation only. Dohmen's interpretation itself, then, is a middle road ("een tussenweg") between the what he calls 'sceptical' Nietzsche readings, in which Nietzsche is presented as being opposed to any constructive theory of mankind, and the more 'metaphysical' readings of Nietzsche, which describe his theory of will to power in terms of a desire to arrive at the essence of our reality.

It is interesting at this point to contrast Dohmen's methodological stance to that of Magnus, Stewart and Mileur, especially from the perspective of their differing attitude towards the status of Nietzsche's literary legacy. Whereas Dohmen speaks of the more explicit quality of the *Nachlaß* as opposed to a more esoteric main body of work, Magnus, Stewart and Mileur emphasize the legacy's problematic nature: "[s]ubstituting *Nachlaß* for published materials confuses an explanation with that which requires one" (43). In other words: the *Nachlaß* poses more problems than it solves.[28]

An additional point of interest here is that Magnus and his colleagues establish a methodological difference in their approach to the published and the unpublished works. As interpreters of Nietzsche that 'split' his writing into two sharply distinctive sections (as opposed to 'lumpers,' who in their view "regard the use of Nietzsche's *Nachlaß* as unproblematic," and thus consider the unpublished work equal or even superior to the main body [35], Magnus, Stewart and Mileur indicate that in the *Nachlaß* Nietzsche is much more concerned with cosmological or ontological certainty. It is for this reason that they focus on Nietzsche's published work, in which there "is very little support (...) when it comes to will to power as a first-order conception" (41). They state:

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[28] The authors compare a section from the unpublished material to its appearance in the published material, that is, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and indicate that nowhere the instances from the unpublished work nowhere indicate how to decisively interpret their equivalent in the published work. The full quote reads: "What is unclear, however, is how or why any of these *Nachlaß* fragments may be said to shed *any* light on the published *Zarathustra* remark. And our sense is that the remainder of the *Nachlaß* bears much the same relationship to the published works, a thesis we cannot hope to demonstrate here, of course. The methodological point suggested should be clear, however: Substituting *Nachlaß* for published materials confuses an explanation with that which requires one" (43).

> Most commentators who treasure the *Nachlaß*, most lumpers, do so because it is there that the representational, foundationalist Nietzsche is to be found, the Nietzsche who does *not* conflate art and philosophy, the Nietzsche who worries about the way the world's intelligible character is itself to be characterized, the Nietzsche who worries about facts and perspectives, truth and reference, the Nietzsche who worries about which virtues we should value and what we ought to strive for. And it is there that Nietzsche writes relatively straightforward declarative sentences, rather than endless hypotheticals and subjunctive conditionals (45-6).

And the lumpers stand opposed to the splitters:

> Splitters (...) need not be seduced by this picture. They may instead honor Nietzsche by placing his published work at the head of that philosophical genealogy which says that there is no ultimate contrast to mark genealogy off from ontology, no point in asking about the way the world is in itself apart from what we make of it. That is the Nietzsche who speaks with many voices in his many published texts, not with a single voice governing every concern. This "postmodern" Nietzsche does not merely reject the view that "philosophy" is a natural kind term; rather, he is the thinker who also gave us a genealogical account of how we came to believe that "philosophy"

> must name a natural kind, that it must have a transcendental standpoint and a metahistorical agenda. (He is, in short, the philosopher who showed in his own published writings what philosophy is, has been and perhaps can only be --its own time written in thought and thought by writing) (46).

And thus the methodology reveals their conception of the status and value of Nietzsche: they state: "[w]e shall suggest that a splitter's Nietzsche (...) may usefully situate him as the first full-blooded postmodern, nonrepresentational thinker, the fountainhead of a tradition which flows from him to Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, Rorty and much recent literary history" (37).

In this particular section, I have focussed on only one difficulty inherent in the structure of Nietzsche's work: that of his split corpus. There are more, obviously, such as the difficulty of categorizing Nietzsche's work according to existing genre definitions, or that of the very specific composition of the individual texts themselves. Yet, as previously indicated, the continuing indeterminacy about the very status of Nietzsche's oeuvre as a whole, a discussion in which some texts are considered to be more Nietzschean than others, seems to me quite unique. There is no general agreement about the real Nietzsche and on the question in which particular corpus of texts he is to be found. Speaking of the "mature" Nietzsche in this sense, as some commentators do, is a rather questionable thing in Nietzsche's case, since, if anything, his philosophy compels us to interrogate the very (metaphysical) assumptions underlying such an assertion. As if true thought resided in maturity! The Nietzsche interpreter seems to be condemned to make a choice, even if he or she should wish to make none. It is a choice in which the slightest move if not reveals then at least compels one to be acutely aware of one's methodological implications.

In this chapter I have focussed on inconsistency and the question of interpretation. One may conclude that inconsistency is ubiquitous in Nietzsche's oeuvre, yet one has to conclude that it also, somehow, serves a purpose. It is hardly appropriate to dismiss Nietzsche's writing on the basis of its inconsistency (although some critics do). At least one should investigate whether inconsistency is not part of the message.

Nietzsche's message may thus be the end of interpretation in the traditional sense (Magnus, Stewart and Mileur), or the shimmering awareness that interpretation is steeped in metaphysics (Jaspers), or perhaps the end of interpretation *tout court* (Derrida). The self-consuming concept, elaborated by Magnus, Stewart and Mileur[29], represents the unintelligible quality of Nietzsche's main concepts, yet also, because of this quality, a higher reality in which the relevance of the concepts themselves has disappeared: Nietzsche is not looking for the actual realization of his conceptual ideas.

Inconsistency for Jaspers may be inevitable: the premise on which his philosophy is predicated is not so much the resolving paradox of the ironic wink (Babich) as the full relapse into silence. A fair representation of Jaspers' Nietzsche would be to argue that the rhetorical movement or structure of Nietzsche's philosophy is cyclic in that it seems to return to its own starting point, to square one: the act of transcendence and the desire to do without. For Derrida, then, finally, inconsistency is the text (any text, but especially Nietzsche's), which means that the text anticipates the claim of inconsistency and exposes it beyond Nietzsche's authority itself as a claim based on the false metaphysical assumption of stability and consistency (as if consistency, as the perfect and pure opposite of inconsistency, should exist).

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[29] Jaspers also speaks of the self-consuming quality of Nietzsche's concepts.

The difficulty with Nietzsche's philosophy is also to a large extent the question of resolution. If the philosophy itself does not resolve, at least this conclusion of a suspension of resolution could still be defined in terms of a resolution. It seems an ontological impossibility to deny truth in Nietzsche, since even the very statement implies a truth, even if the truth is one of untruth. Derrida's attempt to preclude meaning, that is, to empty the text of all unified meaning, seems very difficult to do. Even Derrida's presentation of his own text as a meaningless joke --or the possibility thereof-- has not precluded a rather unified interpretation in his work on Nietzsche. To seek resolution is as basically human as the air we breathe.

Perhaps the most basic inconsistency in Nietzsche (should one say of the 'early' or 'other' Nietzsche?) is that the forgetting of the truth which has been so eagerly obtained, even if this truth is the truth of untruth, cannot be justified in and by itself, but in fact only by something else, that is, an artificial set of values (the quest for truth as justified on the basis of 'life' is still imposing a 'morality' of life, and the question of why one should do so remains unanswered). Nietzsche remains incapable of justifying the acquisition of a truth he subsequently wants to forget. From a logical perspective, that is, the logic that a circular movement, *per se*, is no progress, it is impossible to uphold the necessity that illusion be destroyed just for the sake of having it restored or replaced afterwards. Nietzsche's answer or resolution, as well as that of many of his critics, is of course that one has to act as if truth existed, while --and this is the crux of the matter-- being fully aware that the act is artifice or illusion. In this sense, then, the circular movement is not a full circle: the illusion has become at the same time truth, or, to be more precise, the truth of untruth. One deludes oneself into believing truth, yet, while knowing at the same time that this truth remains also somehow delusion.[30]

The difficulty here is that there is no conclusive answer in Nietzsche on how this ambivalent state of concurrent belief and disbelief should be acquired on a very practical basis. Nobody has yet fully dared to tread in that intricate space beyond metaphysical certainty, and no soul really knows how this should be done. The difficulty is also that Nietzsche may have given indications (for instance by cultivating a sense of play), yet the indications often remain tentative and at least apparently inconsistent. The definition of his most important concepts also evolve over time, yet the evolution is never treated as such, or explicitly commented upon. The Dionysian, for instance, as indicative of this type of complexity, resists a clear-cut interpretation, also just because its content, without any obvious reason or commentary, changes over time.

The final interpretive difficulty I will indicate in this chapter is related to this underlying tension in Nietzsche's philosophy. Interpreting Nietzsche's writing is not just problematic because of its inconsistency in content, style and structure, but also because it is sometimes hard to take what he says at face value. Nietzsche's writing, sometimes for obvious reasons, often provokes an emotional response. The Nietzsche text is struggled with instead of just being read. There is often a need to either dismiss, passionately praise or domesticate his writing. A striking example of this type of impatience with Nietzschean paradox is Robert Solomon, a critic who rather aggressively states in one of his articles: "how can one reject philosophical dogmatism and then hold some more than merely subjective opinion about how it is that one (not just I) ought to live?"[31] Solomon adds:

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[30] Babich, for instance, speaks of Nietzsche's style as a fusion of that which is stated and negated at the same time. The resolution which is proposed here, however, is not without difficulties: the acts of forgetting and knowing may be said to occur only on a linear and mutually exclusive level on which the one is preferred after, and ultimately, over the other. Either the past is revisited, even if so with irony, or it is not, but to do both seems, even ontologically, impossible. From a Nietzschean perspective, one may ask how to forget and know at the same time? Nietzschean affirmation is this constant interplay between knowing and concealing, truth and self-deception. One may also have to question the concept of truth itself, and define it as something one does not really know but perhaps only tells oneself *that* one knows. Nietzsche himself speaks of truth as something which can never be experienced in itself, since all understanding presupposes a certain appropriation. Illusion, in this sense, does not need to be established because it always already *is*. Illusion may be an existential condition of life itself. A sense of the true, even though 'the' real truth as a metaphysical certainty for Nietzsche may not exist, in whichever way one defines this, is perhaps unobtainable or inconceivable. One should problematize the question of whether a sense of absurdity can truly be experienced. (I will return to this in Chapter 2).

> Nietzsche often wrote without paying much attention to what he had said a decade, a book, or even a page earlier. Nietzsche clearly did not always mean to be taken literally, given his sense of irony and hyperbole, not to mention the Nietzschean/Straussian/postmodernist strategies of "reading between the lines" and in the margins (where other readers usually perceive nothing but empty page). There are different styles, there is refracting rhetoric, there are alternative perspectives, contrasting interpretative frameworks, indeed several different Nietzsches, depending on the book, the period, and the mood (270).

Solomon's criticism itself is not the issue here: it is obvious that the difficulty of interpreting Nietzsche for Solomon has a lot to do with the failures of an inconsistent philosopher.[32] Yet, what is interesting here is the rather hostile nature of the attack itself and the desire to outdo Nietzsche on his own terms. Solomon, too, speaks of a paradox in Nietzsche, though for him the paradox is indicative of failure. About the feeling of 'ressentiment,' Solomon states:

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[31] Robert C. Solomon: "Nietzsche, Postmodernism, and Resentment." In: Koelb: 267-293. Solomon states about Nietzsche: "Unlike the other great thinkers of Germany who preceded him, Nietzsche had no system, condemned systematization ("a lack of integrity"), and could not reach any grand synthesis (though he tried periodically) concerning the ultimate nature of significance of his own philosophy. His philosophy remained in fragments, his notes in fragments, his ideas and opinions in fragments, his life in fragments. If there is a postmodern philosophy, Nietzsche is clearly its exemplar, if not its prophet or father, but rather as a kind of failing rather than by intent" (276).

[32] Solomon criticizes postmodern attempts to herald Nietzsche as the first postmodernist. For Solomon, Nietzsche may hide behind the "relativistic, historical, and psychological terminology," but he is a modernist and seeker after truth at heart nonetheless (273). Solomon, too, presents Nietzsche as unable to fully comprehend the complexity of his own message. Nietzsche indicates more than he explains, touches on things more than he truly reveals. Solomon speaks of Nietzsche's concept of resentment in terms of an 'existentialist paradox' (an attempt to push Nietzsche's

> Insofar as language and insight, ruthless criticism, and genealogy are skills worth praising --Nietzsche is willing to build an entire self from them-- then resentment would seem to be one of the most accomplished emotions as well, more articulate than even the most righteous anger, more clever than the most covetous envy, more critical than the indifferent spirit of reason would ever care to be (279).

What is interesting here, once again, is not so much the criticism itself, as that it is indicative of a general tendency among Nietzsche interpreters --the desire to fight Nietzsche with his own weapons. Solomon, like Nietzsche, too expresses his admiration for passion and strength, yet in contrast to Nietzsche it is the 'furious' passion and strength of resentment.[33] Nietzsche's theory is pushed to its logical extremes, and thus, in some sense, made to dissolve into air. In Solomon's case, that which is rejected has to be acknowledged too, because of the very rigour of the criterion itself. Nietzsche's move beyond morality cannot safeguard his own philosophy.

One of the more interesting things with Nietzsche is that apparently his philosophy cannot just stand by itself --if ever that is possible. It has to be appropriated, either as

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theory and arguments to their logical extreme). Solomon states that while "[r]esentment is treated by Nietzsche and by most of his commentators as a despicable emotion that poisons anyone it enters," it is at the same time "among the most creative, perhaps even more so than inspirational love" (279).

[33] Solomon states: "The man of resentment is hardly devoid of passion --even intense passion; his is the ultimate passion, which burns furiously without burning itself out" (281). The admiration felt despite oneself for the human capacity to adapt and survive is Nietzschean in nature.

something which does not make sense (and is invalidated for this reason), or as something which does, but then the interpreter is somehow required to make a selection. Nietzsche has a tendency to put forward the more indigestible truths that must either be ignored or rather extensively justified. Let me simply conclude here with a quote from *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* to illustrate this point:

> Leben selbst ist *wesentlich* Aneignung, Verletzung, Überwältigung des Fremden und Schwächeren, Unterdrückung, Härte, Aufzwängung eigner Formen, Einverleibung und mindestens, mildestens, Ausbeutung (...) Leben [*ist*] eben Wille zur Macht(...) Die "Ausbeutung" gehört nicht einer verderbten oder unvollkommnen und primitiven Gesellschaft an: sie gehört in's *Wesen* des Lebendigen, als organische Grundfunktion, sie ist eine Folge des eigentlichen Willens zur Macht, der eben der Wille des Lebens ist. -Gesetzt, dies ist als Theorie eine Neuerung, --als Realität ist es das *Ur-Faktum* aller Geschichte: man sei doch so weit gegen sich ehrlich!-- *(JGB*, 259).

The question here in fact is very simple: how can one leave this section, in which he speaks not just of life as "essentially" but also ideally (!) inscribed in appropriation, violation, oppression, hardship, annexation, and exploitation, without either justifying or dismissing it?

CHAPTER TWO

NIETZSCHE AND HIS CRITICS: THE QUESTION OF METAPHYSICS

In the framework of an analysis of Nietzsche and his influence, it is useful to see how critics of Nietzsche throughout the twentieth century have perceived and defined Nietzsche's importance for the modern intellectual era. To be sure, this may seem a tremendous undertaking considering the vast amount of often contradictory criticism that exists on the subject. Yet, when strictly focused not so much on the question of what Nietzsche or the individual critics had to say, but rather on the specific question of why he should emerge as one of the key philosophers of our age, this project is feasible in a limited introduction of a thesis chapter.

Thus, though generally speaking, it is safe to state that a more traditional and wide spread conception has been to link Nietzsche to his three intellectual counterparts, Darwin, Marx and Freud, in whichever combination and with whatever restriction. This categorization is effected to emphasize the novelty of his philosophical ideas within the context of nineteenth century intellectual history, as well as to authenticate the fact that Nietzsche, much like these counterparts in their own fields, has proven to be one of the pillars of modern intellectual beliefs, if not of contemporary society as a whole. Thus, the question which Darwin represented on a biological, Marx on a sociological and Freud on a psychological level, Nietzsche was to represent and to settle on a philosophical level, philosophy being rendered here perhaps in its most basic meaning as dealing with the question of what constitutes the essence of human existence. (This, for instance, is described as a true philosophical interrogation by Schopenhauer, and denounced by a more contemporary thinker such as Alphonso Lingis, who in one of his essays defines philosophical interrogation as reflecting a metaphysical reading of the world, that is, as constituting a sign of an underlying "hypokeimenon" or essence (37)[1]).

Among those critics who have cherished this opinion one should also consider those who may not have mentioned Nietzsche explicitly in relation to this "triumvirate [and] cliché of intellectual history (de Man 82),"[2] or who may even have proposed a hierarchical and qualitative distinction between the different nineteenth century thinkers in terms of importance and influence. The point here is that these critics speak of Nietzsche as *a* revolutionary presence among other thinkers, who, in their totality, are producers of a rather striking combination of innovative ideas, have changed and generated the modern and, as it has often been stated, bleak outlook on existence. While remaining within a more traditional or perhaps modernist framework of thought, these critics consider Nietzsche for the most part as the harbinger of yet another truth, though truer perhaps than any truth before him. Nietzsche is defined as the provider of another piece in the puzzle of twentieth century sensibility be it (to speak in David Allison's words) the societal goal of a "higher-order social Darwinism," the inevitability of a "boundless destructive will," the ideal of an alternative to "Judeao-Christian thought," the prospect of a "liberat[ion] [of] culturally repressed sexuality," the teachings of a "new word or doctrine (Overman, Eternal Return, Will to Power)," or any other truth Nietzsche has come to stand for (xi).[3]

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[1] Alphonso Lingis: "The Will To Power." in: *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation* (edited and introduced by David B. Allison). New York: Dell Publishing Co. 1977, 37-63. Lingis writes: "[traditional philosophical interrogation] assumes that the sequences of appearances mean something, indicate, refer to an underlying something, a *hypokeimenon*. It is metaphysical; it takes the appearances to be signs. Philosophical interrogation of the world is a reading of the world, an assumption of the succession of sensorial images as signs of intelligible essences" (37).

[2] *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust.* De Man is referring to Nietzsche, Marx and Freud.

In the following, I will deal with a number of interpreters for whom Nietzsche represented an impelling presence. There is a general consensus that no other philosopher has influenced the modern age the way he did, and that no other philosopher continues to do so the way he does through his writing. If anything, his influence is growing: in the introduction to his *The New Nietzsche*, Allison argues that "[w]hat is at stake in deciding [on the interpretation of Nietzsche's thought] is (..) not merely the nature of one somewhat enigmatic thinker, Friedrich Nietzsche, but the viability of conventional thought itself, its own prospects of limitation, decline, or future" (xi).[4]

Yet, for Allison it is clear that Nietzsche is more than an important nineteenth century thinker. With Nietzsche, we have touched on something essential: can one escape the traditional language of metaphysics? Other critics have been more concerned with Nietzsche as a skilfull recipient of circulating ideologies, or as an accurate interpreter who evoked the moods of his time better than anyone else. For all of them, however, though a difference in degree remains, Nietzsche was important, innovative and challenging. In the first part of this chapter, I will attempt to establish that the degree in which critics have deemed him important reflects an underlying dichotomy between two camps proposing two almost diametrically opposed views.

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[3] See the introduction to "*The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*" by David Allison (xi-xxviii) (footnote 1).

[4] This growing influence seems to be the case in North-America more than in Continental Europe.

In the second part, I will focus on metaphysical ambivalence in the Nietzsche text itself.

The critic: the question of Nietzsche's writing
The first category: Nietzsche as one among the many

Thomas Mann, in his *Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung*, speaks of Nietzsche as "eine Erscheinung von ungeheurer, das Europäische resumierender, kultureller Fülle und Komplexität, welche vieles Vergangene in sich aufgenommen hatte [und] auf mythische Art wieder gegenwärtig machte" (6). It is safe to state that this quote by itself identifies Mann as a thinker belonging to this first category of critics for whom Nietzsche constituted one voice among others. Mann speaks of *eine Erscheinung* instead of *die*, and although for Mann Nietzsche's voice may have constituted the most important or perhaps even the most interesting of nineteenth century philosophers, he does not speak of Nietzsche's philosophy as something radically new. Instead, he emphasizes the originality in which Nietzsche, as a recipient of ideas from Europe's best philosophers, seems to have recycled and given shape to already existing ideas. Mann's analysis of Nietzsche reflects the desire to explain his philosophy in terms of a unified whole, a coherent system based on one single thought: "Die Beurteilung Nietzsches als eines zentrumslosen Aphoristikers ist aufzugeben: seine Philosophie ist so gut wie die Schopenhauers ein durchorganisiertes System, entwickelt aus einem einzigen, alles durchdringenden Grundgedanken" (45).

Qualifications of his philosophy as based on elements such as a "centre," "system" and "one basic principle," and the comparison with Schopenhauer all define Nietzsche as metaphysician and teacher. His philosophy is a quest for essence, though it may not be defined in its totality by a single message or doctrine, be it one of "radical aesthetics" or life. Though Mann's conception of Nietzsche's philosophy may have been subject to change during his life (*Nietzsches Philosophie* reflects a certain impatience with a theory that formerly may have been less critically adopted or understood), it is nonetheless clear that for the young Mann, especially, Nietzsche served as a model he attempted, if not to emulate, to surpass. He was a model whose ideal of a balance between impulse and restraint Mann attempted, if not to obtain, to question in its practice.

John Foster, in his book on a Nietzschean current in literary modernism, speaks of Mann as one of the "heirs to Dionysus," thus equating Nietzsche with Dionysus, and Mann himself with the ideal of an "integrated humanity," whose essence was to be based on a fusion of polarized yet complementary Dionysian and Apollinian drives.[5] *Death in Venice*, which is a novella Mann wrote from 1911 to 1912 , a period in which the Nietzschean ideal may have lacked the more mature criticism of *Nietzsches Philosophie*, is, as Forster claims, a literary appropriation of Nietzsche's initial work on the ideal of a polaristic unity.

Within a similar line of thinking, the Nietzsche scholar Janko Lavrin writes in his *Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness* that "[i]t may easily be proved (..) that all single ideological aspects of Nietzscheanism existed, in some form or other, before Nietzsche, even long before him," and also that, despite this fact, "[h]e succeeded in blending [all these inherited ideas] not so much into a new philosophy as into a new personality, imbued with

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[5] See Foster's chapter "From Nietzsche to the Savage God: An Early Appropriation by the Young Gide and Mann" (145-179).

'the evil conscience' of the age" (10-11).[6] While Lavrin also contests the uniqueness of Nietzsche's philosophy, he emphasizes that of Nietzsche the new man, as well as the importance of symbolic representation. While incarnating the sum of all inherited and life-enhancing ideas that have circulated in the nineteenth century and even before that time, Nietzsche has come to stand for the modern human in general, his life for the intricate lives of anyone living in the twentieth century.[7]

Though Lavrin emphasizes Nietzsche's "incapa[city] [to] adopt[..] a stable and static system" ("[incapacity owing to] his inherent Dionysian temperament (68)"), it is clear that Lavrin belongs to this first category of Nietzsche scholars for whom Nietzsche may have proposed an innovative but not radically new philosophy, that is, something along the lines of a philosophy of philosophy. Lavrin indicates three "periods" in Nietzsche's philosophy, and attributes to the third, though not explicitly, the merit of constituting a resolving synthesis of the former two.[8] Lavrin defines the final phase of his philosophy as a period in which "Nietzsche wishes to rebuild and reform the whole of mankind," an ideal for which "he finds his chief 'point d'appui' in biology." Will to power for Nietzsche is the essence of (human) existence, and as such, in Lavrin's words, "merely a 'biological' modification of

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[6] Lavrin speaks of "aspects of Nietzscheanism," which "may be traced from Heraclitus to Schopenhauer; from the French moral psychologists, especially La Rochefoucauld, to Goethe, Kleist, Stendhal, Stirner, Gobineau, Guyau, and also Dostoevsky."

[7] Lavrin emphasizes the importance of Nietzsche as the first true modern thinker: "By a strange paradox, it is often Nietzsche's virulent and passionate subjectivism that gives to his writings an objective significance and value, making of him a representative, a symbolic figure, which one cannot ignore in dealing with the problems of the modern Individual in general. His personal dilemma is, as it were, a condensed and exaggerated example of those very conflicts through which the advanced contemporary consciousness is passing, or will have to pass" (11).

[8] About the two other phases, see footnote 8.

Schopenhauer's metaphysics." Though disclaiming a rigorous unity of thought in Nietzsche, Lavrin nonetheless states that "thoughts and style reach their perfection in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (..), *Beyond Good and Evil* (..), and *Genealogy of Morals* (..)."

Though putting Nietzsche's truth claims into perspective on the one hand (and thus allowing for a certain degree of inconsistency), Lavrin firmly argues on the other that the "too exultant *verve*" of works such as *The Case of Wagner*, *The Twilight of Idols*, *The Antichrist*, and *Ecce Homo* "already begins to show symptoms of an approaching mental catastrophe" (65-6).[9] Despite this cautious approach to the dynamic quality of Nietzsche's philosophy, it is nonetheless clear that Lavrin has made a decision as to what should represent Nietzsche's thought most accurately, or what should possibly be discarded and approached with suspicion.[10]

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[9] Lavrin's words indicate that he sees Nietzsche's philosophy in terms of an evolution or progress: "The third period of Nietzsche (1882-88) is a reaction against his second dissecting and destructive phase. At the same time it has certain points of contact with his first romantic period, only on a firmer, on a more realistic basis. Once again Nietzsche wishes to rebuild and reform the whole of mankind" (65).

[10] One should not simplify the ways in which Nietzsche's philosophy has been received by this first category of critics or writers. Lavrin also emphasizes the fact that Nietzsche's philosophy lacks coherence and structure, and thus, much like the more contemporary critics, he suggests that Nietzsche is a special philosopher, who, to a certain extent, is different from the ones before him. Lavrin alludes to Nietzsche's (occasional) lack of convictions and dogmatism (if any, Nietzsche holds the dogma of 'Life'), and dubs him a "pragmatist and fighter on behalf of Life" (68). Lavrin states that " he always seeks alliance with those elements, views, and ideas which might be useful for his immediate strategical purposes. Why should he not indulge for a while in orthodox positivism, for instance, if this could check a few qualities which threaten him? Why should he not invoke today the artist against the thinker, and tomorrow the thinker against the artist, should his strategy require it?" (68-9). Mann also suggests that a different reading is required: "those who take him literally are lost" (47). Mann's emphasis on its aesthetic value corresponds with the more contemporary conception of Nietzsche as a philosopher who questions more than he proposes. For Mann, "Nietzsche (...) ist der vollkommenste und rettungsloseste Ästhet, den die Geschichte des Geistes kennt, und seine Voraussetzung, die seinen dionysischen Pessimismus in sich enthält: daß nämlich das Leben nur als äesthetisches Phänomen zu rechtfertigen sei, trifft genauestens auf ihn, sein Leben, sein Denk- und Dichtwerk zu (...)" (45). And: "Durch Nietzsches Ästhetizismus (...) kommt etwas Uneigentliches, Unverantwortliches, Unverlässiges und Leidenschaftlich-Gespieltes in seine philosophischen Ergüsse, ein Element tiefster Ironie, woran das Verständnis des schlichteren Lesers scheitern muß. Was er bietet, ist nicht nur Kunst, -- eine Kunst ist es auch, ihn zu lesen, und keinerlei Plumpheit und Geradheit ist zulässig, jederlei Verschlagenheit, Ironie, Reserve erforderlich bei seiner Lektüre" (47).

The list of interpreters of this first category can easily be extended. Paul de Man in his *Allegories of Reading* argues that the "most recent readings of *The Birth of Tragedy* do not question its logocentric ontology" (89).[11] De Man quotes Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, who states that "one would finally have to admit that, at the point which Nietzsche's deconstruction [(..) of the logocentric discourse] is able to reach, we are still standing under the aegis of truth" (89). Nietzsche's quest, like that of any other thinker before him, is still very much a quest of truth. His is an attempt to return to the origins and to reveal what is hidden. Matei Calinescu in his *Faces of Modernity* relates Nietzsche to Marx, and though he defines the two as the "major precursors of the new critique of ideology" (194), he must, despite whatever confirmation of innovative influence, inevitably discuss Nietzsche's thought in terms of an alternative truth, a doctrine that casts off all appearances, attempts to define what lies underneath and promises the final objective of a more genuinely lived experience. Relating Nietzsche to Darwin, Marx or Freud is defining Nietzsche's philosophy in terms of truth, essence, meaning and telos.

Similarly, Theo de Boer in his *De God van de Filosofen en de God van Pascal* speaks of Nietzsche in relation to Marx and Freud, and calls them "masters of suspicion" (60). Yet, with de Boer, also, Nietzsche stands for essence in "de wil tot macht als de drijvende kracht in het mensenbestaan" (61).[12] Nietzsche figures as a detective "under [whose] magnifying glass little remains that stands the "test of purity" ("toets der zuiverheid")" (61). It is rather significant that de Boer does not speak of the test of 'criticism,' but of purity, which as a condition indicates that purity itself apparently continues to be valid. The crucial question however is whether Nietzsche still believes in purity and essence or whether he does not.

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[11] *Allegories of Reading*, 1979.

[12] De Boer uses the Dutch adjective 'drijvend' which is related to the verb 'drijven' and which means both 'to float' and 'to drive.' Will to power, for de Boer, is both this 'floating' and 'driving' force underlying human existence. 'Mensenbestaan' is human existence.

The second category: Nietzsche as the "true and only one"

For the second classification of critics and Nietzsche scholars, Nietzsche constituted not so much one among the many as perhaps the one and only of his category. Thus, Harold Alderman in his *Nietzsche's Gift* speaks of Nietzsche as someone who was "first and foremost a philosopher" and, in fact, a little later, as "*the* first, and (..) foremost, philosopher of philosophy" (2) (my emphasis). While abandoning any appeal to the generic fluidity of Nietzsche's work, Alderman primarily emphasizes his role as philosopher, in contrast to his categorization as a writer of fiction or philosophized fiction, poet-philosopher, philologist, or psychologist.

With Alderman, the novelty of Nietzsche's philosophy is nothing more than the rigorous philosophizing about philosophy itself. In fact, true philosophy, more than anything else, must reflect on its own limitations. On the first page of his analysis, Alderman outlines his intentions: "[t]his interpretation (..) will establish that Nietzsche's work is quintessentially and fundamentally philosophical exactly because it focuses on the origin, structure, and limitation of human thought and experience" (1).

Perhaps even more rigorously, Richard Rorty, in the introduction of his *Essays on*

Heidegger and Others, speaks of a "post-Nietzschean philosophy," an indication by itself that Rorty considers Nietzsche's legacy to constitute an intellectual event important enough to separate him from previous thinkers. Rorty speaks of post-Nietzschean and of Nietzsche's philosophy itself in terms of "pragmatism," and uses the post-Nietzschean paradigm as a substitute for what he earlier referred to as postmodern philosophy (1-2). About the nature of Nietzsche's pragmatic philosophy, Rorty is quite clear: "A lot of what Nietzsche had to say can be viewed as following from his claim that 'knowledge in itself' is as impermissible a concept as 'thing-in-itself'" and his suggestion that "[the categories of reason] represent nothing more than the expediency of a certain race and species --their utility alone is their 'truth'" (2).[13]

It might be argued that this second category of critics regards Nietzsche as the forerunner of a deconstructionist movement. His is not the search for ultimate truth, essence or meaning grounding this world of appearances. Nietzsche may be the propagator of his own philosophy but he is no metaphysician, and if he were, the metaphysics he establishes is a "creative rather than a discovering activity" (Alderman 142).[14]

The polemics in which this group engages are sometimes specifically directed against the interpretations of Heidegger, for whom Nietzsche may have attempted yet never fully succeeded in escaping metaphysics. In this context one should carefully consider de Man's words that "Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics (..) has, perhaps misleadingly, been described as a mere reversal of metaphysics or Plato" (109). Or even more so Alderman's that "by imposing [a] schema (..) on Nietzsche's thought, Heidegger has missed the fundamental critique of absolutism which is the crux of Nietzsche's own work. Nietzsche must be read not as "the last metaphysician" but as a thinker "who (..) tried to free thought of that peculiar metaphysical pretension which has so long been its bane" (167).

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[13] Rorty quotes from *Will to Power*.

[14] Alderman states: "[t]hus art is the truly metaphysical activity in the sense that, in Nietzsche's view, metaphysics is a creative rather than a discovering activity."

There is an attempt to liberate Nietzsche's writing from the constraints of traditional reading strategies: no longer is it necessary to find an overall justifying principle or "genetic totalization" (de Man 100) in his work. Instead, critics are focusing on the discontinuous fragments, the lateral asides, the unpublished material. The continuous narrative is distinguished from the discontinuous fragments, and a hierarchical difference is established: de Man speaks of the "dependence of narrative, continuous texts (..) on discontinuous, aphoristic formulations [as] a recurrent structural principle of Nietzsche's work from the start" (101).[15] The fragments expose the rhetorical devices of the main text, and question its authority: "[t]he unpublished fragments, contemporaneous with the main text (..) reduce the entire *Birth of Tragedy* to being an extended rhetorical fiction devoid of authority" (101).

This second group of scholars tends to subvert and question the conventionally established hierarchy between fragment and text, aphorism and narrative, lateral and main. Texts do not exist by themselves and, strictly speaking, have no centre but the one attributed to them. Yet, the important thing for these critics is that Nietzsche's writing itself engenders this strategy: it renders the centre of a text problematic exactly by raising questions about its own centre. The same way it reveals the problematic nature of language and rhetoric by exposing, through the critical voice of a large number of significant 'asides,' its own rhetorical devices. Alderman may still speak of the "crux of Nietzsche's work," yet one should realize that the crux of a text does not exist by itself but by the interpretive act only. In the final analysis Nietzsche's work demonstrates that there can only exist a plurality of competing interpretations among which one has no superiority over the others.

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[15] De Man tells us that "[t]he lateral material for *The Birth of Tragedy* that Nietzsche left out of the main essay contains formulations that retranslate into some kind of statement the disjunction between the semantic assertion and the rhetorical mode that occurs in the main text" (100).

For Hans Vaihinger Nietzsche wills illusion, not for the sake of truth but for the sake of illusion itself. Ultimately, no final message is delivered: Vaihinger speculates that "[if Nietzsche's career had not been cut short by illness], he would have justified the utility and necessity of religious fictions [with the same relentless frankness as with which he previously denounced them]."[16] Interpretation, then, becomes a delicate business. Interpretation of and access to the text are turned into problematics of their own. There is an appeal, much like Nietzsche's own, to a new way of understanding. Allison, for instance, states that with Nietzsche "[t]he question of interpretation (..) is no longer marginal" (xi). In the introduction to his earlier mentioned collection, Allison starts off with a set of questions about the possibility of conventional interpretation: "as to Nietzsche's writing itself, what kind of access can we claim in the first place? What are the means of interpreting Nietzsche's writing? To what extent is Nietzsche's text something *to be* interpreted?"

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[16] Calinescu in his *Faces of Modernity* criticizes Vaihinger's approach: "Vaihinger clearly does not share Nietzsche's antireligious feelings. This makes him speculate, in the conclusion of the chapter on Nietzsche, about what directions the philosophy of the latter would have taken if his career had not been cut short by illness. "He would not have revoked his *Anti-christ* ..., but he would have presented the 'obverse of evil things' with the same relentless frankness: he would have 'justified' the utility and necessity of religious fictions"" (184-5). Calinescu rather impatiently adds: "Who knows?"

The list of this second category could be extended in much the same fashion as the first, yet with a few restrictions. If for the first Nietzsche may still be regarded as a searcher for an underlying and permanent reality, the second may be said to have defined Nietzsche as the great sceptic for whom any claim to a universal truth is unacceptable. Within this second category, however, there is an important group of critics for whom Nietzsche is neither sceptic nor metaphysician: Nietzsche has attempted to go beyond traditional metaphysics, while yet claiming or appealing to a set of semi-permanent truths that are incompatible with traditional metaphysics. Thus, though Nietzsche may have described existence in terms of will to power, it should be acknowledged that for these critics will to power has no essence in itself (at least not in the conventional way), and in fact defies and questions notions such as essence. For these critics, then, speaking of the essence of existence in terms of will to power makes no sense if will to power has no essence itself.[17]

Longinus Dohmen, for instance, in this context, speaks in his book of the "dynamic plurality" of Nietzsche's philosophy, and claims to situate himself with his Nietzsche interpretation beyond the position of sceptic or metaphysician.[18] Alan Schrift speaks of the Dionysian pleasure to create a set of metaphysical (interpretive) truths for the sake of pleasure only, in order to escape both the metaphysical dogmatism of traditional hermeneutics and its opposite: a never-ending plurality of competing (interpretive) possibilities.[19]

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[17] This list is not to be meant exhaustive; there are many more important Nietzsche interpreters. But what I do maintain is that this categorization, based on the criterion of a freedom from metaphysical restraints, is large and precise enough to contain most interpreters. Gilles Deleuze's 'Nietzsche,' for instance, though not explicitly treated in this analysis, would also be part of this second camp of critics.

[18] Longinus J. Dohmen: *Nietzsche over de menselijke natuur*. Kok Agora. Kampen, 1994.

The controversy

At this stage, then, while taking the previous reservations into account, it is possible to set off the first group of critics against the second in a large variety of interpretations ranging from slightly differing to nearly diametrically opposed views. While Mann speaks of his philosophy as being conditioned by "einem einzigen, alles durchdringenden Grundgedanken," and the invalidity of considering Nietzsche as an "aphorist without centre," Allison argues for pretty much the opposite:

> (...) [Nietzsche's] use of metaphor, aphorism, apothegm, styled ambiguity all stands apart from the very system of Western thought that demands specific unity and identification. The text of Nietzsche no longer is constrained to a foundation of univocal meaning, discrete cause, unifying origin, to the principle of identity and specific difference (xxiv).

Allison argues that Nietzsche's message is conveyed through a plurality of often contradictory textual voices, and that if unity of thought in the form of some underlying principle were to exist, it would be the implicit message that, indeed, in the conventional sense unity of thought does not exist. Or if it did, that it is a questionable and fictitious concept imposed by the interpreter who creates coherence instead of finding it. For this second category of critics, it is clear that Nietzsche may uphold truth, yet also that, if anything, he questions and exposes the preconceived assumptions which underlie this proposition of truth. Allison states that "what is important [in Nietzsche] is not the pretension to seize upon an unchanging truth, an ideal meaning, or fixed being, but rather to uncover the considerations that incline or impel us to follow such conventions. What is in question, then, is the *deciphering* of the code that assigns a value to certain terms and the rules that govern our use of these terms" (xvi).

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[19] Schrift speaks of the need and the pleasure of self-mastery: "Through self-mastery, Dionysus always returns to wholeness with an increased level of strength, and through stylistic mastery, the masterful interpreter is rewarded with an increased understanding of the rich ambiguity of the textual labyrinth. In putting forth this image of the Dionysian mastery of the labyrinth, Nietzsche in effect confronts the interpreter with a challenge to see how far into the textual labyrinth one can go without losing one's way and becoming hopelessly entangled within its complex maze of possible interpretations" (197).

Whereas Calinescu may argue on the one hand the "importan[ce] [of realizing] that for Nietzsche neither truth nor error, fiction, or lie has any value whatsoever in and by itself," he firmly speaks on the other hand of Nietzsche's work "as a whole" and the "feverishly dialectical quality of his thought" (184-5). Calinescu's view reflects the need for consistency in a theory which is perhaps too blatantly ambiguous. But it should be noted that for a large number of contemporary critics this need itself is grounded in metaphysics, and that it is Nietzsche himself who has argued against this mode of interpretation. For them, Nietzsche questions the concept of regarding a work as a whole, and identifies the attempt at establishing synthesis as a craving for metaphysics or an underlying justifying principle.

Michael Mahon, in his analysis on Foucault's Nietzschean legacy, speaks of the need for a "nondiscursive" and "nondialectical" language, and it is Nietzsche who provides the means. While quoting Foucault, Mahon states that "we required the Nietzschean figures of tragedy, of Dionysus, of the death of God, of the philosopher's hammer, of the Superman approaching with the steps of a dove (..) [t]o awaken us from the confused sleep of dialectics" (65). At the end of the day, we may be faced with the doubtful conclusion that Nietzsche's philosophy is feverishly dialectical (Calinescu) in that it breaks up dialectics (Mahon).

Yet, perhaps it would be wiser to abstain from all too eager conclusions on what Nietzsche had to say, and conclude something on a different level, namely that views on Nietzsche are not just different but in fact conflicting and often incompatible. Mann and Calinescu stand opposed to critics such as Allison and Mahon, and this opposition, to whatever minor degree, seems indicative of a large part of Nietzsche interpretation to date. For the first, Nietzsche's philosophy, however contradictory, resolves. For the second, it complicates matters. In the second part of this chapter, I intend to focus on Nietzsche's writing itself, and will attempt to explore the specific reasons behind this controversy.

Nietzsche and the knowledge of the child at play on the question of metaphysics

> "Es ist immer noch eine ganz neue und eben erst dem menschlichen Auge aufdämmernde, kaum noch deutlich erkennbare *Aufgabe, das Wissen sich einzuverleiben* und instinktiv zu machen, --eine Aufgabe, welche nur von denen gesehen wird, die begriffen haben, daß bisher nur unsere Irrtümer uns einverleibt waren und daß alle unsre Bewußtheit sich auf Irrtümer bezieht!" (*FW*, 11)

> "Wir haben eben gar kein Organ für das *Erkennen*, für die "Wahrheit": wir "wissen" (oder glauben oder bilden uns ein) gerade so viel, als es im Interesse der Menschen-Herde, der Gattung, *nützlich* sein mag" (*FW*, 354).

There is no consensus, then, in Nietzsche criticism. In fact, the views on Nietzsche are not just simply divergent but often diametrically opposed. The contentious issue is metaphysics or his belief in essence. For some critics Nietzsche is just one thinker among the many, while for others he is the first true philosopher. This polarization of opinions raises some interesting questions about Nietzsche's philosophy: why is it that controversy continues on whether Nietzsche believed in essence or did not? On whether he wanted to define existence? Or even beyond the question of metaphysics: why are the opinions so polarized?

As we have seen, it is quite possible to establish a classification of Nietzsche critics based on the question of metaphysical adherence. For some critics his philosophy centres around one unifying idea, while for others this centralizing unity is not just lacking, but precisely something Nietzsche never intended to achieve. For some he remains a seeker of truth, while for others he offers a fully developed theory to overcome the need for universal truths. The least one can say at this stage is that Nietzsche's philosophy lacks clarity at crucial points, and that it somehow offers room for this collection of rigorously dissenting views.

Another set of difficulties follows from this ambivalence --the difficulty of defining metaphysics itself. A clear understanding is often lacking in those interpreting Nietzsche's work, and this creates additional problems exactly where the question of a successful transcendence is raised. Metaphysics is often defined in terms of essence, substance or thing-in-itself, yet this definition is largely influenced by Heidegger's conception of metaphysics as the forgetting of being with a capital B (in fact, the forgetting of being merely as being[20]). Metaphysical longing is defined in terms of nostalgia for essence and substance beyond being itself.[21]

Yet another question is that of the possibility of escaping metaphysics itself. The concept of doing without essence has had a strange attraction for many thinkers (it certainly fascinated Nietzsche), and it will perhaps always continue to do so. In the following, I will attempt to address some of these questions. I intend to demonstrate that it is extremely difficult to provide any conclusive answers to the question of Nietzsche's antimetaphysical stance and that any attempt at doing so can be undermined in a relatively easy fashion. The starting point in this section will be that Nietzsche's philosophy is ambiguous on the question of metaphysics, and that it is this essential ambiguity which causes the controversy to continue.

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[20] English translations of Heidegger's distinction between 'das Sein' and 'das Seiende' can be confusing. In *Metaphysics: A Critical Survey of its Meaning* (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff 1974), Ando Takatura uses 'to be' versus 'being': Heidegger's metaphysics thus becomes the "inquiring into the 'to be' qua 'to be'" (104).

[21] Herman Berger in his analysis *Wat is Metafysica?: een studie over transcendentie* (Assen 1993) argues for a different understanding of the concept of metaphysics, one that according to Berger is closer to Aristotle's original definition of the term, and which does not separate (or forget to separate) 'das Sein' from 'das Seiende' ('to be' from 'being'), precisely because it focuses on 'das Sein' *in relation to* 'das Seiende': "De metafysica onderzoekt wat aan het (fysisch) zijnde toekomt precies inzover het is: het wordt in het licht van het zijn beschouwd. (...) Het zijn is het eigen, substantiële zijn van het zijnde. Het zijn is aan dat zijnde *immanent*. Maar het zijnde wordt niet naar zijn eigen zijn beschouwd maar naar hèt zijn, naar dàt zijn 'waarbuiten niets is'. Het wordt dus beschouwd in het licht van wat aan het zijnde transcendent is. Metafysica is de affirmatie van een absoluutheid die aan elk afzonderlijk zijnde immanent is maar die dat zijnde tevens transcendeert (minstens omdat het tegelijk ook het zijnde van de andere zijnden is) (41). Metaphysics as the forgetting of being is a distortion of the Aristotelian definition of metaphysics.

My task is not to condemn any of the existing Nietzsche camps, but rather to investigate the reasons why this polarization of opinions has taken place --and still is-- in Nietzsche interpretation today. To prove this, we need only refer to works such as *Nietzsche as Postmodernist: essays pro and contra*[22], which is a collection of interpretations behind which looms the dark cloud of the metaphysical question. As the title indicates, the choice is either for or against, within or beyond metaphysics. The following will also be a dialogue with interpreters such as Paul de Man, Allan Schrift and others for whom Nietzsche proposes a new theory beyond metaphysics. I will investigate the paradigm of the child at play in the sand, and attempt to demonstrate that this metaphor speaks much less definitively in favour of freedom from metaphysics than contemporary thinkers would have us believe.

The difficulty of understanding metaphysics and the question of a successful transcendence

Contemporary Nietzsche interpretation centres around one complex yet basic problem --that of metaphysics. To what extent are we to consider Nietzsche as a philosopher who not only attempted to escape the constraints of traditional metaphysics, but who actually succeeded in doing this? Who believed that metaphysics, in whichever way one would define this, was something that could be conquered or transcended (the term transcendence may be inappropriate here since, if anything, Nietzsche's project of liberating himself from metaphysics is directed against any form of transcendence in the traditional sense of the word).[23]

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[22] Edited by Clayton Koelb. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.

Perhaps one should argue that Nietzsche's stand is more sceptical and reserved. Is the real tragedy of his writing not so much the end of religious transcendence as the realization in his heart of hearts that escaping metaphysics proper is impossible, and that any attempt at doing so is ultimately an act of self-deception and misplaced human arrogance? Are human beings inherently religious, the concept of religion being more subtly defined here as a constellation of metaphysically preestablished particulars that constitute the human mind and body and presuppose its working? Can one survive a life without meaning, essence or a perception of the self as a unified entity, while at the same time giving in to a playful economy of truth alternating with lie? In other words, does the Nietzschean infant truly escape metaphysics in that it enjoys both the creation and destruction of the sand castle it has built, or has the child only imagined that it does?

Nietzsche may criticize the metaphysical tradition, yet it remains to be established what exactly is being proposed to overcome it, and how convincingly this is done. Heidegger's claim of Nietzsche's adherence to a full-fledged metaphysical tradition often stands as a point of reference: Nietzsche may have attempted to escape the tradition, yet because of the rigour of the attempt itself, he entrenches himself even deeper in the metaphysical swamp of essence.[24] Contemporary critics, however, often emphasize that Nietzsche does provide important directions and directives with regard to an alternative conception of reality. Nietzsche's critique of logic, that of substance, of identity, of a distinction between thought and being all point at a rejection of the old metaphysical tradition. His notions of play, of reason and logic as aesthetically justified and his experiments with language, style and genre all refer to a world beyond the world of substance.

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[23] It is still possible to speak in terms of a transcendence through immanence. Jaspers, in his study on Nietzsche (*Nietzsche: Einführung in das Verständnis seines Philosophierens.* Berlin 1935), speaks of Nietzsche as a metaphysical thinker who clings to transcendence precisely in those instances when he wishes most vehemently to reject it. For Jaspers, Nietzsche's attempt to define being in terms of pure-this-worldliness cannot prevent him from holding on to concepts which have lost their referent within this world of immanence. Jasper's Nietzsche thus reveals the complexity of being: that human beings must constantly transcend.

Yet, it is also true that even the most vehement defender of Nietzsche as a new thinker must remain tentative when it comes down to defining the practical reality of Nietzsche's antimetaphysical project. Indications how the new creative human being should live and understand life are at best vague, and on the overall rather modest in scope.[25]

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[24] Based on Heidegger's *Nietzsche* I (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961). The following quotes are sufficient here to make my argument: "Das Denken Nietzsches ist gemäß allem Denken des Abendlandes seit Platon Metaphysik. (...) Die Metaphysik ist die Wahrheit des Seienden als eines solchen im Ganzen. Die Wahrheit bringt das, was das Seiende ist (essentia, die Seiendheit), daß es und wie es im Ganzen ist, in das Unverborgene der ἰδέα, der perceptio, des Vor-stellens, des Bewußt-seins" (257). "Nietzsche denkt im Gedanken des Willens zur Macht den metaphysischen Grund der Vollendung der Neuzeit voraus. Im Gedanken des Willens zur Macht vollendet sich zuvor das metaphysische Denken selbst. Nietzsche, der Denker des Gedankens vom Willen zur Macht, ist der *letzte Metaphysiker* des Abendlandes. Das Zeitalter, dessen Vollendung in seinem Gedanken sich entfaltet, die Neuzeit, ist eine Endzeit" (479-80).

[25] Djurić speaks of Nietzsche's "creative act" ("der schöpferische Akt") as something that Nietzsche opposes to metaphysics, yet also as something which as a practical reality remains largely "unclear" (unbestimmt) and "ungraspable" (unfaßbar) (148). Djurić states: "Klar ist nur, daß Nietzsche unter dem Begriff "schöpferischer Akt" die ursprüngliche Möglichkeit des menschlichen Handelns verstand, unabhängig von allen seinen bisherigen

Underlying the problem of metaphysical adherence is the difficulty of definition. If going beyond metaphysics means doing without all distinctions between appearance and substance, it is questionable whether Nietzsche fully complies with this definition. Heidegger, for example, considers Nietzsche's truths of will to power and eternal recurrence as an attempt to arrive at the essence of being. Heidegger argues that beyond the layer of appearances Nietzsche discovers things as stable and permanent as the will to create truth or time, or even reality itself to be circular.

Other critics emphasize, however, that Nietzsche's concept of will to power escapes the traditional language of philosophy in that it defies description and does not refer to any kind of substance or essence, but to a playful plurality of ever-changing manifestations.

Yet, even if this is true, it might be argued with the same degree of legitimacy that Nietzsche does favour the life-affirming manifestations of will to power over those which negate, thus imposing the criterion of life, and ultimately, perhaps, the subjective truth that to capture the true essence of life it should be lived in a certain way. And this, strictly speaking, must reflect a metaphysical conception of reality in which essence may be concealed yet is not absent. Escaping metaphysics, in the sense of taking being purely as being, appearance without substance, or existence as a perpetual flow of random events, may be impossible in the very literal sense of the word.[26]

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geschichtlichen Gestaltungen, und daß ihm dabei das menschliche Handeln in seiner reinen, unverfälschten Form vorschwebte, frei von jeder teleologischen Determinierung und Fixierung. (Er meinte damit eigentlich die Tätigkeit, die gänzlich zu sich selbst gekehrt ist, die in sich ihre Rechtfertigung trägt, ohne Rücksicht auf alle möglichen Zwecke und Ziele)" (149). The "creative act" is said to be freed from "teleological determination," yet it is clear that the difficulty here is also simply the practice of what it entails to act without teleological determination.

[26] Nietzsche speaks of "das souveräne Individuum" as the "ripest fruit" of humanity freed from morality ("das autonome übersittliche Individuum"), yet also as someone who is definitely not without a sense of morality. The

In fact, our understanding of metaphysics may be largely filtered through Nietzsche's own interpretation of the metaphysical tradition as characterizing the pretence of knowledge ('Erkenntnis') through logic and discourse. For Nietzsche, metaphysical investigation in the traditional sense of the word goes hand in hand with the belief in obtaining essence through the faculties of the spirit as opposed to those of the body, and from this perspective it is clear that Nietzsche is not a metaphysician.

Yet, again, if metaphysics is defined in more narrow terms as being based on the belief that essence exists, and that somehow the fulness of existence can be sought, acquired or revealed, Nietzsche's escape from metaphysics may be less evident. If knowledge or essence can be acquired through a more intuitive type of reason, or through any faculty other than those of the spirit, would that make Nietzsche someone who escapes or precisely belongs to metaphysics? Nietzsche's superman may be the playful child sunk into oblivion, yet isn't this god-sent child, who in Nietzsche's own words is the "ripest fruit" of all, and whose position the most exemplary and perfect of all humanity, secretly pledging allegiance to metaphysics in that it constitutes the embodiment of life that is lived to the fullest? Perhaps one should say that going beyond metaphysics proper is the radical rejection of any substance, essence or higher value whatsoever, since only then, when a truer world behind the merely apparent is being negated, and some sort of essence no longer secretly thought to be out there, is it possible to speak of something radically opposed to metaphysics.

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sovereign individual feels the need deep down inside ("ein stolzes, in allen Muskeln zuckendes Bewußtsein") to lead humanity to its state of completion. Nietzsche states: "Dieser Freigewordene (...) wie sollte er es nicht wissen (...), wie ihm, mit dieser Herrschaft über sich, auch die Herrschaft über die Umstände, über die Natur und alle willenskürzeren und unzuverlässigeren Kreaturen notwendig in die Hand gegeben ist? Der 'freie' Mensch (...) hat in diesem Besitz auch sein *Wertmaß*" (*Zur Genealogie der Moral*, II, 2).

Yet, irrespective of whether Nietzsche escapes or in some ways still belongs to the metaphysical tradition, he himself is aware of the difficulty of the task. While vehemently advocating Dionysian rapture, he informs us at the same time that this type of liberation from the all too human compulsion of seeking truth behind illusion is not for the meek and gentle soul. Nietzsche emphasizes often enough that it takes a special type of human being who is equipped with a superhuman quality, as if to illustrate that escaping metaphysics proper belongs to a higher level of reality different from the one we, ordinary souls, know.

These few theoretical remarks, however tentative, demonstrate that the metaphysical question is not so easily resolved. Metaphysics is like the swampy earth to which we must return and into which our super-human desire to escape essence must disappear. Nietzsche's theory on eternal recurrence, as an example illustrative of this type of complexity, may defy traditional metaphysical conceptions of how reality is to be defined, yet it does not abandon the concept of a knowable reality itself.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will focus on a number of the arguments used by those who situate Nietzsche in a tradition that moves away from a metaphysical conception of reality. I will attempt to demonstrate that these points remain contentious on the basis of Nietzsche's philosophy itself, and that a certain degree of disagreement is therefore inevitable. Attributing to Nietzsche the quality of escaping metaphysics implies making choices where Nietzsche himself has remained silent, unclear or ambiguous. In his *Nietzsche und die Metaphysik*, Djurić concedes that Nietzsche's conception of play is anything but a fully developed system: "Auch über das Spiel hat sich Nietzsche nicht viel deutlicher, bestimmter und ausführlicher als über den schöpferischen Akt geäußert. Da gibt es ebensoviele Lücken und Unstimmigkeiten, so daß alles nur Andeutung geblieben ist" (150).[27] In the section that follows, I will focus on some of these choices made by contemporary critics. One may call them poststructuralists, yet this definition would be too strict. The most one can say perhaps is that these critics, with some minor or less minor restrictions, follow the premises and propositions of a poststructuralist type of Nietzsche interpretation.

Poststructuralist thinkers have generally considered Nietzsche as escaping metaphysics. Derrida, for instance, while focussing on texts that no longer have the pretension of reflecting reality, speaks of the fluidity of Nietzsche's writing itself as defying the traditional conception of how texts should be interpreted. In the previous chapter, I have indicated that for Derrida Nietzsche's writing is set up like a textual hymen, which can be penetrated yet not possessed, and ultimately presents the reader in search of meaning with nothing but the reflection of his or her own metaphysical longing. That is, a longing for essence and truth exactly there where these entities are absent. The text thus tricks the reader: it plays a playful game with the mind that wants to possess the true essence of the text.[28]

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[27] Though Nietzsche defines the creative act in terms of an act performed in and by itself, he remains tentative when it comes to identifying play as the prerequisite or even ideal condition for the creative act. Djurić states: "Von vorneherein ist weder klar, was Nietzsche dem Spiel zuordnete, noch wie er sich das Verhältnis zwischen Spiel und anderen menschlichen Tätigkeiten (...) vorstellte; unklar ist auch, worin Nietzsche die wirklich schöpferische, die wirklich befreiende Bedeutung des Spiels erblickte, und ob er überhaupt glaubte, daß die Umwandlung der gesamten menschlichen Tätigkeit in Spiel als epochales Geschehnis möglich sei" (150). It should be noted, however, that despite these reservations Djurić considers Nietzsche's notion of play to be an important indication towards an alternative life freed from metaphysics.

[28] Though Derrida is used here as a spokesman of a poststructuralist conception of Nietzsche, it should also be noted that, in my opinion, that his interpretation is ambiguous on the subject of a successful overcoming of the metaphysical tradition. (See chapter 6). His interpretation of Nietzsche also deviates from the positions of a number of other poststructuralist thinkers.

The concept of play is generally considered as the key by means of which Nietzsche attempted, if not fully succeeded, to liberate himself from the metaphysical prison of essence. In the following, I will take up on this element of play in Nietzsche's writing, and will attempt to demonstrate that with Nietzsche's notion of play, it is problematic to speak in terms of something that escapes metaphysics only. Play with Nietzsche may subvert traditional notions of the usefulness and purpose of life (Nietzsche's *Weltspiel* has no *Zweck* or *Ziel* in the religious or scientific sense of those words), yet at the same time it must be acknowledged that Nietzsche speaks of the seriousness with which one should play the game, and that, consequently, he is no less concerned with a breaking down of metaphysics than with its renewed restoration. That this restoration or recapturing of a sense of essence is part of a sublimated type of metaphysical longing is not the issue here. The point is that Nietzsche was concerned with a metaphysical anchoring of or within play at least as much as he was with the play itself. Nietzsche explicitly speaks of play in relation to *Unschuld* and *Ernst* as if to metaphysically ground illusion.[29] *Unschuld* and *Ernst* are the two metaphysically sealed doors that bar the vortex of nihilism, that keep Nietzsche from falling into the void of playful yet endless illusion. This does not contradict with the observation that Nietzsche attempts to escape metaphysics or even emphasize play. What it does indicate, however, is a difference in emphasis: Nietzsche's definition of play is that of play as a new type of seriousness. Poststructuralist interpreters would rather emphasize Nietzsche's play as a new type of (creative and free) play.

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[29] "Innocence" and "Seriousness."

The paradigm of the child

Thus Schrift quotes in his "ludic alternative to Heidegger's reading" Zarathustra's speech on the child: "Unschuld ist das Kind und Vergessen, ein Neubeginnen, ein Spiel, ein aus sich rollendes Rad, eine erste Bewegung, ein heiliges Ja-sagen. Ja, zum Spiele des Schaffens, meine Brüder, bedarf es eines heiligen Ja-sagens: *seinen* Willen will nun der Geist, *seine* Welt gewinnt sich der Weltverlorene"[30] (".. the spirit now wills *its own* will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers *his own* world" (Schrift 68)).

The point here, and Schrift makes it clear, is not so much the creation of new values as the play with these values (Schrift states: "what is played *with* are values"). The child now is the conqueror *of*, and ruler *over*, his own world (to conquer may be too strong a translation of '(sich) gewinnen,' which is more to gain or acquire and which seems to me less active), and it is precisely this superiority over the newly created which constitutes the element of play. Only the creation acknowledged as creation can generate a sense of play. The realization of act as artifice is the prerequisite of the leap towards a freedom from metaphysics. And precisely this is the pivotal point around which turns the question of a ludic alternative to metaphysics. Schrift states:

> The seriousness of Kinderspiel is qualitatively different from the all-too-heavy seriousness of the metaphysical comforters who preach salvation. It is the seriousness of the child building castles in the sand, meticulously creating a world in the full knowledge that the sea may

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[30] *Also Sprach Zarathustra*: "Von den drei Verwandlungen."

> rise up at any moment and wash this world away (68).

The significance of this quote does not lie so much in the meticulous creation of the child's new world, as in the child's realization that the creation exists as creation. The child realizes that nothing is permanent, since it is "in the full knowledge that the sea may rise up at any moment and wash [its] world away." The child's seriousness is a sublimated type of seriousness ("qualitatively different") in that the child recognizes the play as play, and its seriousness at the time of play as the seriousness with which one plays.

The image of the child building sand castles at the sea shore is powerful, and the idea of a transcendent type of playful seriousness is all too tempting. Djurić, in his chapter on Nietzsche's "Umwandlung der gesamten menschlichen Tätigkeit in Spiel," focuses on this same point of a playful type of seriousness characterized by the player who preserves a certain distance towards the game. Both quotations are whispered to the candid listener in one and the same breath. Very similar to Schrift Djurić states:

> Eigentlich ist die erwähnte Hingabe nie vollkommen, sie impliziert nicht die Identifizierung des Spielers mit dem Spiel, seine Auflösung in ihm. Der Spieler bewahrt immer eine Distanz zu dem, was er tut, da er doch immer irgendwie 'weiß', daß all dies nur Schein ist, daß alle seine Spielschritte der Spielwelt als einer imaginären Realität angehören. Daher ist der Ernst, den Nietzsche den Teilnehmern am Spiel zuschreibt, weit entfernt von jeder Verblendung und Voreingenommenheit (165).

Devotion (*Hingabe*) to the game is never totally complete, since Nietzsche's player nevertheless "always simply somehow knows" that the game is a game. The bolt on which hinges the promised construct of freedom from this world of essence is the "irgendwie weiß" of the player, the "somehow knowing" that the game is illusion.

Yet, precisely here, in the indeterminate usage of the "irgendwie weiß," lies the weakness of the argument. The quotation marks in which appears the player's "knowing" betray the speculative nature of this knowledge at and during play. The inverted commas subvert the argument that knowing in play is simply knowing that play is play, or simply equal to any other act of knowing or knowledge. The commas are the old and all too visible metaphysical cogs that make the anti-metaphysical argument tick.[31] The assertion of knowing that the world is play is the too-rational approach to something which escapes reason --our devotion to the game of life. Giving in to play requires, if only temporary, a loss of the sense of play as play. We might still 'know,' rationally, yet beyond reason, there may be something in us that still, while playing, does not or should not know that play is play. Schrift's child, who is fully aware that the castle it has built is going to be swept away, may be real, but only then when the waves are part of its game. The child is real only when it has willed the destruction of its own castle. At the end of the day, the parent of the child (though Nietzsche's child plays in blessed solitude with and by himself) breaks down the metaphysically established illusion of the game, a game which the child, if only for a moment, has taken for real. The child's tears mark the awareness of the loss of the essence of the game. The waves of reality are absent if the child truly wishes to "meticulously create his own world" and "build castles in the sand." The child's joy in a game is to take it, in its most literal sense, for real, and not as play.

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[31] Derrida speaks of the suspending quality of the quotation mark ("Nietzsche's writing is compelled to suspend truth between the tenter-hooks of quotation marks" (*Spurs* 57)). Yet, would the marks not ultimately also indicate an inability to free oneself from a metaphysical understanding of reality? The quotation marks invalidate the semantic determinability of the concept, yet also the limitations of understanding through language.

The point I am trying to make here is that the antimetaphysical argument suffers from metaphysical speculation exactly where play is said to be seen as play, that is, where the anti-metaphysical pretension of the argument reaches its highest point. Schrift speaks of the child as being "in the full knowledge" of play as play, yet the "irgendwie 'weiß'" of Djurić is already considerably less confident on the question of what exactly one 'knows' when play is seen as play. The knowledge Djurić is referring to might be something different from conventional knowledge since this knowledge is also somehow, if only temporarily, a forgetting. Nietzsche speaks here of a "sacred Yes" or the child's "innocence" in play, but it is rather ironic that Nietzsche should appeal to the old metaphysical notions of sacredness, seriousness and innocence to elevate the argument into the higher realms of precisely this freedom from metaphysics. This may have been his intention, of course, but even then it is rather ironic that his use of the old metaphysical (or even religious) concepts should demonstrate his very incapacity to even fathom a life beyond metaphysics, or to find an appropriate terminology to describe it.

Djurić's semantically invalidated knowing, as demonstrated by the inverted commas of 'weiß,' indicates that knowing might not be knowing in the conventional sense at all, but rather something one does not know, or at least does not know how to describe. To know in the sense of rationally knowing that the game of life is a game seems hardly sufficient in our attempt to elevate our state of being to a level where essence has become a playful game. Appealing to reason in something that escapes reason, that is, our devotion to what we call life, is missing the point. The child's first gasp of air is grounded in metaphysics: it is a gasp not for breath but for essence where, always and already, reason is irrelevant. The breath it takes is commanded by an authority whose realm is beyond any sanctioning of breath as play. The mother's final push to bring her child into the world is grounded in an essence that is prior to, without and beyond knowing. Reason must shiver before the cold whisper of life.

Schrift's powerful image of the child building castles in the sand is taken from Nietzsche's text, and it is rather significant that the emphasis in Nietzsche is more on the laws of the game than on the laws of the child. While for Schrift it is obvious that the child "actively *plays with* will to power" instead of being played by it, Nietzsche speaks of a type of play in which the child is being played with as much as he is the creative observer of the game.[32] Establishing difference here may seem a fastidious undertaking considering that in this particular section Nietzsche also speaks of the contemplative nature of the player at play ("der Künstler steht *beschaulich über* (..) dem Kunstwerk"), yet it is important to see that the difference indicates that the freedom with which the child can choose to play, or be master of his own game, is considerably reduced.

Nietzsche speaks of play in terms of the "drive to play" (*Spieltrieb*) and the "need [that] compels" (*das Bedürfnis zwingt*), thus at least partially subjecting the child to a force that is more powerful than the child itself, a force that beyond whatever degree of mastery compels the child to create essence. The play has ceased to be just play if the child, over and over again, must take play for real by its own inner urge to seek essence, by its craving to act as if play is real. Nietzsche states that the child creates essence "according to inner laws" ("gesetzmäßig und nach inneren Ordnungen"), yet if there is a set of laws that both compels the child to play and defines the way in which it has to play, how can it claim to be master of these laws, which after all govern it? Nietzsche emphasizes the child's ever-permanent state of innocence at play *(in ewig gleicher Unschuld)*, yet innocence refers to more than the lack of a sense of guilt or morality only: the child is innocent precisely because it allows itself to be fused with the game, because it lacks, if only for a moment, this sense of play as play. Nietzsche's innocence is a far cry from the artist's irony. The quote reads:

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[32] With regard to the three transformations, Schrift states that "what distinguishes the camel from the lion and the child is that while all three are understood as a play of forces, i.e., as will to power, the camel is passively *played by* will to power while the child actively *plays with* will to power" (70). Schrift emphasizes the child's ability to "recognize" play as play (69).

> Und so, wie das Kind und der Künstler spielt, spielt das ewig lebendige Feuer, baut auf und zerstört, in Unschuld --und dieses Spiel spielt der Äon mit sich. Sich verwandelnd in Wasser und Erde, türmt er wie ein Kind Sandhaufen am Meere, türmt auf und zertrümmert: von Zeit zu Zeit fängt er das Spiel von neuem an. Ein Augenblick der Sättigung: dann ergreift ihn von neuem das Bedürfnis, wie den Künstler zum Schaffen das Bedürfnis zwingt. Nicht Frevelmut, sondern der immer neu erwachende Spieltrieb ruft andre Welten ins Leben. Das Kind wirft einmal das Spielzeug weg: bald aber fängt es wieder an in unschuldiger Laune. Sobald es aber baut, knüpft, fügt und formt es gesetzmäßig und nach inneren Ordnungen.[33]

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[33] *Die Philosophie im Tragischen Zeitalter*: 7

The point here is not that Nietzsche eliminated or even attempted to reduce the child's (or artist's) superiority over the game, thus denying the possibility of human activity to ultimately transcend its own metaphysical illusion. What I am arguing, however, is that Nietzsche did emphasize the rigour of the play's metaphysical power at least as much as he emphasized the child's power to create and have control over his own game, thus demonstrating a definite hesitation in cutting a clear break with metaphysics. Emphasis on the sheer power of illusion, beyond whatever human interference, cannot but reduce the belief in the child's, artist's or just simply human possibility to break with metaphysics.

The above quotation makes clear that the child does not simply command the metaphysical power of the game to be unleashed by his own doing. Nietzsche states that the urge ("Bedürfnis") takes hold of ("ergreift") the child, thus indicating the child's submission to his innermost needs, or, in fact, to a rather impersonal set of needs. Nietzsche uses the poetic "ihn ergreift das Bedürfnis" as a construct in which the impersonal and faceless 'es' (*es* ergreift ihn das Bedürfnis) remains implicit and undetermined. *Es* takes over, or, in fact, takes 'grip' of the child (*ergreift*) when words no longer suffice in describing what exactly takes place.

In this context, Djurić condemns Eugen Fink for subjugating Nietzsche's importance of a practice-oriented type of break from metaphysics to the importance of a sheer cosmological one, thus emphasizing the crucial difference between the child instigating play itself and the child being played with, that is, the difference between a creative type of play and a play to which one just simply gives in (Djurić 152-3). While the first is escaping metaphysics, the second is merely a succumbing to it. Djurić argues that for Fink Nietzsche's concept of play involves the "world as play" (*Weltspiel*) rather than "human beings as players" (*der spielende Mensch*), thus reducing the possibility of humans to effectively create their own play and preserve superiority over illusion. But the fact remains that, despite Djurić's effort to retain the human endeavour at the centre of Nietzsche's philosophy, Nietzsche himself, as demonstrated in this quote, wittingly or not, has reserved a much less superior and comfortable position for his playful child than Djurić would like us to believe.

The second point is that speaking of knowing in terms of forgetting and knowing at the same time suffers from the metaphysical assumption that knowing at play is just simply like any other type of knowledge or knowing. Somehow we know that the game of life is a game, even though we might at times suppress the knowledge that play is play by forgetting and acting as if we do not know.

Yet, as Djurić states, while forgetting, we nonetheless continue to somehow know. Schrift speaks of a "qualitatively" different type of knowing ("seriousness"). The point here, however, is that this novel type of knowing at play which is also somehow forgetting defies the traditional conceptions of what it is to know. Knowledge at play seems to take place on a subconscious level rather than anywhere else, and as something which does not coexist with forgetting but which is rather suppressed or concealed.[34]

As previously indicated, knowing in terms of a rational assimilation of pieces of knowledge or information according to which action is initiated, which is the traditional definition of knowing, hardly seems a sufficient definition of what goes on when the participant of the game deals with the game of life. Related to this metaphysical speculation involved in defining knowledge in the game of life simply as the rational act of knowing is the question of the insufficiency of the words with which to describe what exactly goes on when one knows during play. As indicated, Schrift speaks of a qualitatively different type of seriousness or knowing, yet the question of why one should still resort to inadequate terminology remains unresolved. Why refer to seriousness at all if this type of seriousness also incorporates the lack of it? Nietzsche speaks of the child's *Ernst* and *Unschuld*, and its sacred pledge to life, yet the falling back upon the old metaphysical definitions of how to approach life must indicate, beyond whatever expression of venomous irony, the impossibility to ultimately make a distinction between the efforts of the naive believer and the bad faith of the one claiming to somehow know.

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[34] This corresponds more with the Sartrean view that life itself is conditioned by the concealing of what one at some level of conscious minds knows all too well, yet which does not interfere with our conscious lives.

Nietzsche's instinctive knowledge

The two quotations with which I have introduced this second part show that Nietzsche was thinking in terms of an "instinctive" type of knowledge. The "irgendwie weiß" of Djurić and the "full knowledge" of Schrift refer to Nietzsche's "internalized knowledge" (*sich einverleibt[es] Wissen*). Nietzsche's awareness of play as play turns away from reason in that it is an embodied type of knowledge, an instinct (*Instinkt*), a drive (*Trieb*).

Yet, it should be noted that the problem of metaphysical speculation remains. Nietzsche, though perhaps not in so many words, makes a distinction between knowledge of the spirit and that of the body, thus establishing a qualitative distinction between the two in favour of the latter. Yet, as Nietzsche at other times has stated himself, both the distinction and the qualitative differentiation between body and spirit are based on a false metaphysical premise. In a section on the prevalence of the body in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, for instance, Nietzsche argues "Leib bin ich ganz und gar, und Nichts ausserdem, und Seele ist nur ein Wort für ein Etwas am Leibe" (I, 39). We are nothing but body, and the soul is only a word. To speak of bodily knowledge in terms of knowledge is making the false metaphysical assumption that bodily knowledge is still somehow knowledge, though different from a rational type of knowledge.[35]

In the final analysis, however, there can only exist one type of knowledge for human beings --the knowledge of the conscious mind, the knowledge shaped by words.[36] Speaking of the unconscious knowledge of the drives is in itself an impossibility, since the drives and the unconsciousness are beyond and outside language and consciousness. True, language may define the unconscious in terms of knowledge, yet this is, strictly speaking, as Nietzsche has indicated himself, merely appropriating the unfathomable.

In a section entitled "to experience and to invent" Nietzsche states that consciousness is the interpretation of unknown physiological processes, and that to experience is to invent

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[35] In general, Nietzsche wishes to make knowledge (*das Wissen*) which is valuable instinctive. On the sovereign individual's sense of responsibility he states: "Das stolze Wissen um das außerordentliche Privilegium der *Verantwortlichkeit*, das Bewußtsein dieser seltenen Freiheit, dieser Macht über sich und das Geschick hat sich bei [dem souveräne[n] Individuum] bis in seine unterste Tiefe hinabgesenkt und ist zum Instinkt geworden, zum dominierenden Instinkt" (*Zur Genealogie der Moral*, II, 2). The difficulty here is metaphysical in that Nietzsche considers the drives to be a higher and more direct expression of life.

[36] Nietzsche uses words such as *das Wissen, die Vernunft, die Erkenntnis, das Denken, das vernünftige Denken*, etc., to designate this knowledge.

("Erleben ist ein Erdichten"): "all unser sogenanntes Bewußtsein [ist] ein mehr oder weniger phantastischer Kommentar über einen ungewußten, vielleicht unwißbaren, aber gefühlten Text."[37] Nietzsche also argues that drives do not think, simply because they cannot think: "Da jeder Trieb unintelligent ist, so ist 'Nützlichkeit' gar kein Gesichtspunkt für ihn (...) sie [the drives] denken nicht an den Nutzen (*weil sie nicht denken!*)."[38] Knowledge in order to be knowledge is always already rational, converted into language, transformed into familiar imagery, summoned onto the plane of consciousness: "Wir hören auf zu denken, wenn wir es nicht in dem sprachlichen Zwange tun wollen."[39] Human beings cannot know what lies beyond the act of knowing. This means that Nietzsche's internalized knowledge is no knowledge, unless defined as such (and perhaps inevitably distorted) on a purely rational, linguistic, or epistemological level. Instincts and drives may exist, yet speaking in terms of instinctual knowledge, they must inevitably suffer from the human need to domesticate a force over which, literally speaking, human beings have no say. This force defies, by its very nature, the boundaries of human definition.

Nietzsche's inconsistency here may be said to reflect the complexity of the metaphysical question. For Nietzsche the task (*Aufgabe*) is to somehow make the child's knowledge at play more instinctive, and considering Nietzsche's impatience with reason we understand why. Yet, once again, making knowledge instinctive is impossible, unless the knowledge is no real knowledge but already somehow instinct or drive. Human beings cling to life, yet strictly speaking we do not know what it is that makes us cling to life. As Nietzsche states himself, to find a rationale may be possible, yet the rationale is made up of language, and language is a collection of fictions with which to grasp a reality we cannot know. We may be said, then, to understand life as play, to breathe to play, to breathe as play, to playfully breathe. Yet, understanding life as play is grounded in reason, and it is Nietzsche himself who denounces the faculty of the mind to approach something as unfathomable as the simple act of living or breathing. Living seems to be foregrounded in metaphysics and essence in that it compels human beings to move, ever forward, backward, create, destroy, struggle, believe and breathe, as if it all makes sense, as if there were no end to our days.

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[37] *Morgenröte*, 119.

[38] Dohmen in his *Nietzsche over de menselijke natuur* argues that this point has been contentious for Nietzsche himself. For Dohmen, Nietzsche distinguishes two different types of knowledge: the conscious knowledge of our conscious being and the unconscious knowledge of our drives. Though the idea of attributing intelligence to the drives prevails, Dohmen argues that at times Nietzsche nonetheless seriously doubted the concept of intelligent drives and instincts (115-6).

[39] *Aus dem Nachlaß der Achtzigerjahre*, p 862 (Karl Schlechta Edition, München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1956).

These few concluding remarks in the previous paragraph are not intended to triumphantly indicate Nietzsche's inconsistency, even if on a metaphysical level. Dismissing Nietzsche and pointing out inconsistency on the basis of a few carefully selected quotes would be missing the point. My intention in the second part of this chapter has been primarily to indicate that the metaphysical question with Nietzsche is not so easily resolved. Deciding on Nietzsche's successful transcendence of metaphysics, as Djurić argues, in his well-documented study, means making decisions where Nietzsche remains ambiguous or incomplete. It comes as no surprise that interpreting Nietzsche's text involves making choices, just like interpreting any other text. Yet, with Nietzsche the stakes are high and the questions on which decisions are to be made remarkably complex. We have seen that deciding on the metaphysical question is touching on something very basic and human. To decide on the successful transcendence of metaphysics is to be faced with the inevitable and perhaps unresolvable question of having to use an instrument which is grounded in metaphysics: our consciousness and our language.

As indicated, I have attempted to demonstrate that in the very quotes on the playful child, premise of the poststructuralist paradigm, Nietzsche remains more ambiguous and tentative than some of his critics would have us believe. The quotes demonstrate that escaping metaphysics proper is problematic in that the child is not always superior to the game, which is the condition of a successful transcendence. Nietzsche states that inner laws compel the child to play and to fuse with the game no less than that the child freely creates. I have attempted to demonstrate as well that the premise of the child "somehow knowing" (Djurić) that all is nothing but play is based on speculation if one continues to define this somehow knowing in terms of knowledge. This may appear vague, yet what I am trying to argue here is that considering play as play in the game of life can hardly be a sufficient criterion to escape metaphysics when this knowledge plays on a rational level only. Nietzsche's attempt to make this knowledge somehow instinctive proves that this has been a contentious point for Nietzsche also. Escaping metaphysics on a practical level is surely not the all too rational avowal of just claiming to consider life as play. That is merely bad faith. "Fully knowing" (Schrift) that life is illusion to the extent of fully knowing what life is all about is problematic, in Nietzsche's view also: "Wir haben eben gar kein Organ für das *Erkennen*, für die "Wahrheit": wir "wissen" (oder glauben oder bilden uns ein) gerade so viel, als es im Interesse der Menschen-Herde, der Gattung, *nützlich* sein mag" (*FW* 354). We only know as much as we ought to know for our own well-being.

Eugen Fink states that "[d]as dionysische Gipfelglück des Menschen liegt in der panischen Erfahrung, die uns die Nichtigkeit aller individuierten Gestalten kundgibt, das Individuelle in das Geschehen des Individuationsspieles zurücknimmt" (188). The most intense joy lies in our panic-stricken awareness of life as it is.

This awareness may occur at times, to be sure. Yet, my argument has been that in order to live human beings must rather suppress than prolong this panic-stricken sentiment. That in fact living life itself is conditioned, over and over again, by the suppressing of its more terrifying realities. Ultimately, my argument is also simply that human beings are steeped in metaphysics, and that a sense of metaphysics or essence is the condition for all human life. Related to this is the difficulty of language, and the fact that language is perhaps inescapably metaphysical.

Let me conclude here with a quote. In one of the stories of Jorge Luis Borges' *Ficciones* (these precious testimonies to the complexities of the human mind), the author speaks of his stammering acquaintance with "Funes the memorious," this "precursor of the supermen," this "vernacular and rustic Zarathustra" (59), this mannish boy gifted and cursed with the means to see and feel the world as it is:

> [Ireneo Funes] was (..) almost incapable of ideas of a general, Platonic sort. Not only was it difficult for him to comprehend that the generic symbol *dog* embraces so many unlike individuals of diverse size and form; it bothered him that the dog at three fourteen (seen from the side) should have the same name as the dog at three

> fifteen (seen from the front). His own face in the mirror, his own hands, surprised him every time he saw them. (..) Funes could continuously discern the tranquil advances of corruption, of decay, of fatigue. He could note the progress of death, of dampness. He was the solitary and lucid spectator of a multiform, instantaneous and almost intolerably precise world (65).[40]

But the author states that "[Funes] was not very capable of thought. To think is to forget differences, generalize, make abstractions" (66). I would like to argue with Borges' position that to think is to forget. Perhaps one 'somehow knows,' yet the knowledge does not interfere: thus we may know yet do not realize, we may argue and reason, yet, because of the urge to establish a set of metaphysical certainties, we cannot feel the intensity of what, who and where we are:

> Ireneo was nineteen years old (..); he seemed to me as monumental as bronze, more ancient than Egypt, older than the prophecies and the pyramids. I thought that each of my words (that each of my movements) would persist in his implacable memory; I was benumbed by the fear of multiplying useless gestures" (66).[41]

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[40] The title of the story is "Funes el memorioso." I am quoting from the English collection: *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings* (Edited by Donald A. Yates & James E. Irby. New York: Modern Library, 1983).

[41] Borges describes this story as a metaphor for insomnia.

CHAPTER THREE

DIONYSUS' FLUIDITY: NIETZSCHE AND THE DIFFERENT CONCEPTIONS OF THE DIONYSIAN

Dionysian fluidity: Nietzsche and his critics

Was die Dionysischen unter „dionysisch" verstanden, läßt sich nicht in wenigen Worten sagen, dazu waren die Formulierungen nicht klar genug, gingen die Meinungen zu stark auseinander. Mit Nietzsche selbst stimmte kaum einer seiner Anhänger überein (...) (Martin Vogel).

In the previous chapters, I have indicated some of the complexities inherent in Nietzsche's philosophy. I have attempted to show to what extent these difficulties have accounted for a plurality of interpretations. Instead of having attempted to resolve particular questions such as the exact nature of his style, the precise content of the different concepts, or the proper stand in the metaphysical debate, I have merely dealt with the existence of these questions. In a sense, I have only identified them and defined them as problematic. I should emphasize here, once again, that my intention in this analysis of Nietzsche interpretation cannot and should not be to say anything definitive on Nietzsche's philosophy itself --if at all such a goal could be in harmony with Nietzsche's thought. The center of his thought is rather the identification of the problems, that is, the questioning of what it is that makes these questions problematic in the first place. Why does Nietzschean metaphysics pose a problem? Or why do his style and concepts do so? If the answer to Nietzsche's philosophy or writing is nothing but the formulation of this set of problematics (and I think that to a large extent one can maintain this position), I will have solved at least something, although the solution to the problem may very well be an absence thereof. The questions in

Nietzsche's writing have no real answers. They merely indicate what is problematic, both for Nietzsche and human beings in general.

In this third chapter, then, I will be speaking of the Dionysian in Nietzsche as one of those questions that have no real answer. I will consider the Dionysian not so much a problem as perhaps a problematics. That is, as something which has no real solution, but which merely indicates the complexity of the material it touches upon. As I have argued in the first chapter, the Dionysian with Nietzsche is a concept which for the greater part lacks clarity. Nietzsche defines this notion throughout his works and notes, yet the definitions are not always consistent. One of the difficulties, as observed by a large number of critics, is that the concept develops over time. The Dionysian is defined in Nietzsche's first published work as the counterpart of what he calls the Apollonian, yet it changes in his later works into something which includes this notion too. The Dionysian, at this point, no longer stands opposed to the Apollonian or is complemented by it, but replaces it altogether.

In this context, John Foster, in his *Heirs to Dionysus*, makes a distinction between two types of interpretation that spring from Nietzsche's ambivalence on the subject of Apollo and Dionysus. Both interpretations have, given Nietzsche's ambiguity on this point, a certain validity. One interpretation cannot prevail over another. The first focuses on the Dionysian as a drive with an inherent capacity to seek and provide its own means for sublimation. Foster states: "The [Dionysian] instincts are not simply a primitive substratum, the animal in man, to be guided or held in check by some superior entity such as the intellect or spirit (...). Rather, they are the fundamental material of human nature, for they give rise to the higher faculties through their inherent capacity to transform themselves" (63).

The second interpretation differs from the first in that it approaches the paradigm in terms of a simple opposition. Instead of a parallel, there is a symmetrical relationship between the two entities. Foster states that "Apollo and Dionysus might suggest a contrast between intellect and instinct, or between disembodied reason and vital energy." He indicates Nietzsche's own ambivalence on this question: "Nietzsche presents Dionysus as less specifically human." For Nietzsche the Dionysian is also a:

> (...) group of instincts (...) related to an elemental force of change throughout the universe as a whole, a contradictory force bringing both creation and destruction, triumph and pain. (...) The human manifestations of this ambivalent force are the sexual and aggressive instincts (64).

The difficulty in determining the exact relationship between Apollo and Dionysus is also related to the fact that in speaking of the Dionysian Nietzsche situates himself within a tradition that started long before him, with Homer and Euripides, moving into early German Romanticism and writers in the nineteenth century. Max Baeumer, in his article on the Dionysian tradition, states that the Dionysian as noun is Nietzsche's invention, yet that the adjective and the name Dionysus itself were used and defined well before him. He argues that Nietzsche's success in promoting his philosophical version of the Dionysian was so important that it obscured most other previous treatments of this concept:

> [o]ne can grant Nietzsche the primacy he asserts for himself only with relation to his „transformation" of the Dionysian into a 'philosophical pathos,' that is, into a rhetorical cliche. He accomplished this so brilliantly and propagandized it so effectively, however, that we hardly remember anything more about the long and significant prehistory of the Dionysian in early German Romanticism (O'Flaherty 166).[1]

Thus, in establishing the very nature of the concept of the Dionysian, both Nietzsche and his interpreters are faced with the problem of including and distinguishing from previous definitions. Nietzsche may have redefined the Dionysian, but as a concept he did not invent it. And this seems to be one of the most striking difficulties that are involved in the interpretation of this concept. As something that touches on the sensual, the sexual and the irrational in human beings (even if humanized by its capacity to transform itself into something higher), the Dionysian is perhaps bound to resist precise identification. In his attempt at defining its essence, Nietzsche may be said to have contained or delimited the Dionysian, or in any case to see it in a special way, yet the concept itself, as something so basically human, clearly surpasses the strict boundaries of Nietzsche's, and possibly all definition. What can one say, really, about a phenomenon which is to cover the absence of consciousness, or the disintegration of human individuality. One may give examples of what the Dionysian entails, yet arriving at anything substantial of what it is that distinguishes this phenomenon from a more conscious and rational type of experience seems impossible.

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[1] About Nietzsche's contribution to the terminology issue, Baeumer states: "Müller is the first to apply the adjective "Dionysian" consistently and with far greater frequency than "Bacchic," after Goethe had introduced the word "Dionysian" --probably as the first to do so, even though only in passing. Schelling had also played a part in the introduction of this term, but he, too, uses it only occasionally, and never in one of his most important works. Müller speaks of "Dionysian" festivals, figures, processions, and formations. The adjective derived from the name of this god led to a special kind of conception --to that of the general attribute "Dionysian." This attribute was abstracted from the Greek god himself, from his being and his myths, and was generalized in psychological terms by Müller, aestheticized philosophically by Schelling, and finally made by Nietzsche into the substantive "the Dionysian," whereupon it attained the status of a legitimate ancient and modern phenomenon" (182). About the alleged status of originality, Baeumer further states: "Nietzsche's assertions that he was „the first to comprehend," "discover," and "take seriously" the Dionysian, and that he was the first to describe it in its "psychological" significance and to have "transformed" it into a philosophical system, are intentional rhetorical exaggerations. Winckelmann, Hamann, and Herder had already discovered, comprehended, and formulated the concept of the Dionysian long before him. (...) (166)." In: *Studies in Nietzsche and the Classical Tradition*. Ed. James O'Flaherty, Timothy Sellner and Robert Helm). Friedrich Schlegel would

Camille Paglia, in her *Sexual Personae*, speaks of the Apollonian in terms of things that are "intellectually clear to us."[2] As Nietzsche, she opposes Apollonian to "Dionysian identification," yet where the first is distance, in the case of Dionysus:

> (...) space is collapsed. [there] [t]he eye cannot maintain point of view. Dionysus can't see the forest for the trees. The wet dream of Dionysian liquidity takes the hard edges off things. Objects and ideas are fuzzy, misty (...) (98).

At least what is rational can be explained, or analyzed. Paglia seems to suggest that ultimately there is just very little to say and to know about something that is so close to human beings.

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probably also fit this genealogy of the Dionysian. The term "dionysisch" and its contrasting with "apollinisch" were already introduced in his history of (Classical) Greek poetry.

[2] Camille Paglia: *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickenson*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

Part of the problem of Nietzsche's definition of the Dionysian is that any attempt to understand it is seriously hampered by Nietzsche's attempt to arrive at something very basic and human. Dionysus is the principle that rules and defines all of human nature. Nietzsche explains the Dionysian in terms of extremes. Martin Vogel speaks of the Dionysian in terms of a god who has acquired the highest degree of knowledge; who affirms life in its most cruel form, and himself as driven to create by the principles of pleasure and cruelty:

> (...) [v]om dionysichen Menschen heißt es bei Nietzsche, daß er den höchsten Grad des verstehenden und erratenden Instinkt erreicht habe, den höchsten Grad an Mitteilungskunst besitze, in jede Haut, in jeden Affekt eingehe; daß es ihm unmöglich sei, irgendeine Suggestion nicht zu verstehen. Er stehe nicht als Betrachter außer der Welt, die er erkennen wollte; er sei eins geworden mit seiner Erkenntnis. Er suche nicht nach einem Gotte; was er sich noch als göttlich vorstellen könne, sei nur Er selbst als Schöpfer seiner eigenen Welt (253).

It is clear from this quotation that the difficulty here is also of a practical nature. The Dionysian condition is not so easily acquired. Dionysian man is a god, who is one with his knowledge of the world as it is, and who, in fact, must acknowledge the beauty of life in all its ugliness.

The extreme ways in which Nietzsche sees the Dionysian makes the concept elusive: it cannot really be understood, at least not in the conventional way. The Dionysian world, either in Nietzsche's definition or in general, may be a concept so utterly strange to human beings that one must domesticate it (paradoxically, Nietzsche also presents the Dionysian as utterly human). One manipulates the truth also because conscious life looks so different from this reality. Vogel speaks in this respect of "verharmlosen," or the rendering less harmful of the Dionysian truth, which as a phenomenon Nietzsche must already witness during his life.[3] The Dionysian is steeped in contradiction: Kurt Hildebrandt speaks of "[ein] starke[r] Lebensstrom im Ganzen, Schmerz und Lust, der ungebändigte Zeugungswille."[4] In a different text, he speaks of Dionysus as "der ewige Ring der Wiederkehr, aufsteigendes und absteigendes Leben, Zeugung und Sterben, Schaffen und Zerstören, Lust und Pein, Tag und Nacht."[5]

Yet, how should one understand a phenomenon which is both "pain and lust," "day and nigh"? In *Ecce Homo*, a book Nietzsche publishes just before his mental collapse, he speaks of the "Dionysian lust to destroy": "Ich bin bei weitem der furchtbarste Mensch, den es bisher gegeben hat; dies schließt nicht aus, daß ich der wohltätigste sein werde. Ich kenne die Lust am Vernichten in einem Grade, die meiner Kraft zum Vernichten gemäß ist--, in beidem gehorche ich meiner dionysichen Natur."

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[3] Vogel's study is a detailed (and often quite humorous) analysis on the reception of Nietzsche's Dionysus. In a section subtitled "Unschärfe des Begriffs," Vogel relates the following anecdote: "Nietzsche selbst mußte es erleben, daß das Wort "dionysisch" von seinen engsten Freunden stark verharmlost wurde. Malwida von Meysenbug, seine mütterliche Freundin, berichtete ihm über die Vorführung einer "Tarantella" in Sorrent: „Es war Festtag, eine Alte schlug das Tamburin, ein Knabe spielt die Maultrommel, junge Mädchen mit Rosen im Haar, bloßen Füßen und kurzen Rökchen, tanzten in harmloser Lust. Es war reizend dionysisch." Erst kurz zuvor war Nietzsche nach einem längeren gemeinsamen Aufenthalt von Sorrent abgereist. Man war sich monatelang sehr nahe gewesen -und nun diese unnietzschische Wortzusammenstellung von „harmloser Lust" und "reizend dionysisch". Schon an diesem einen Fall hätte sich Nietzsche darüber klar werden können, welchen Wert es hat, ein neues Modewort unter die Leute zu bringen" (Martin Vogel: *Apollinisch und Dionysisch*. Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1966. 254).

[4] Hildebrandt's concern here is the supremacy of the Apollonian (though he deems a fusion with the Dionysian into something higher inevitable). The full quote reads: "Dionysisch ist der starke Lebensstrom im Ganzen, Schmerz und Lust, der ungebändigte Zeugungswille. Apollinisch das Begrenzende, Bändigende, Idealiserende ist dann mehr als das Dionysische, wenn es nicht mehr als Gegenkraft, sondern als höhere Stufe, welche die Dionysische Kraft, aber gereinigt, gebändigt in sich enthält, verstanden wird. Dionysisch ist der Lebensring im Ganzen, Apollinisch ist der höchste Augenblick in diesem Ringe, ist der Augenblick des Sieges, der höchste Ausdruck des Weltgeschehens, des Willens zur Macht" (Kurt Hildebrandt, in: *Kant-Studien* 41, 1936, 245).

[5] The quote reflects, as Vogel already points out, Hildebrandt's desire to reconcile the two powers under the banner of the Apollonian: "Dionysos also ist der ewige Ring der Wiederkehr, aufsteigendes und absteigendes Leben, Zeugung und Sterben, Schaffen und Zerstören, Lust und Pein, Tag und Nacht, Apollo aber ist die errungene Schönheit, das vollendete Götterbild, die Kulmination der Sonne, 'der große Mittag'. Dionysos ist Fülle des Werdens, Apollo Höhe des Seins; Dionysos das gebärende Chaos, Apollo das zeugende Bild, die Norm, die Idee; Dionysisch ist Liebe, Apollinisch das Geliebte. Apoll und Dionysos schließen sich innig zum Ringe höchsten Lebens: Apoll das Juwel, Dionysus der tragende Goldreif" (K. Hildebrandt: *Wagner und Nietzsche*, Breslau 1924, 221 f).

Perhaps the proper way to understand this would be ironically --most interpretations of *Ecce Homo* take it as a self-ironic stand. Yet, Nietzsche is not usually ironic about the Dionysian, and indeed writes very seriously about the topic. Dionysus is the harsh truth behind the appearances, whether it be as eternal flux or as stable life energy (this is also to indicate that the Dionysian is directly related to Nietzsche's concept of Eternal Recurrence and Will to Power). Nietzsche and his interpreters use designations such as "Rausch," "Verzückung" and "Entpersönlich[ung]" (the first two designations are prefigured in Goethe's *Faust*) to characterize the Dionysian condition. Yet, these states and conditions, which all include the disintegration of individuality, seem to exist in different degrees and intensities. And the degree to which disintegration, if this concept is at all clear in itself, should take place is far from obvious.

In this chapter, I will try to answer some of the questions I have raised in this introduction. As indicated in the first chapter, I will consider Nietzsche's concept of the Dionysian as representative of his whole philosophy. Karl Jaspers already points out that the key concepts in Nietzsche resist precise identification. I would like to add that these concepts not only compete for supremacy among themselves, but that they somehow deprive their counterpart notions of their contents. They take away each other's specificity in a move towards reductive substitution. Thus, concepts such as the "Dionysian," the "Übermensch," "Eternal Recurrence" and "Will to Power" compete to represent in Nietzsche, if not the same, at least very similar ideas. As mentioned previously, the Dionysian is perhaps most liable to claim supremacy in this respect. As a concept, it can be said to rule out the others. The Dionysian also receives Nietzsche's attention throughout his entire philosophical life. Both his first and his last published works contain allusions to this concept.[6]

I will also argue that the Dionysian, because of its resistance to identification, somehow stands for Nietzsche's writing as a whole. One could say that the Dionysian, on a micro-level, represents what Nietzsche's writing incorporates on a larger scale. It resists interpretation. And it exposes interpretation as an appropriative act. Once again, there may be no real or mature Nietzsche, just the prism and the various configurations of the reflected light that capture its essence.

In the following, I will start off with a more theoretical investigation into the Dionysian. I will initially focus on Nietzsche, and will attempt to determine what it is that makes this concept so elusive in his writing. I will provide a few examples of how the Dionysian has been reworked by later critics. In the second part of this analysis, I will speak of a Dionysian current in literature, and will propose an analysis of the Dionysian in a few works. Nietzsche will be the basis of this analysis, yet the way in which his concept of the Dionysian is understood by some of his earliest interpreters will be even more central. These interpreters will be novelists. Literature may reveal more to us about attitudes toward the Dionysian than explicit criticism. The true Dionysian may be something that has to be read between the lines.

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[6] That is: *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and *Ecce Homo*.

Three versions of the Dionysian

Nietzsche's preoccupation with the Dionysian has been consistent throughout his life. A brief look at the Nietzsche-index to his works already shows the extent to which the Dionysian plays a role. Nietzsche's terminology on the Dionysian greatly varies, from "Dionysian Art" to "Dionysian Spirit" and "Life." Examples on what the Dionysian is to cover abound, from "Dionysian Lust," to "Dionysian Music," "Dionysian Nature," "Dionysian Philosophy," "Dionysian Intoxication," "Dionysian Madness," "Dionysian Wisdom," "Dionysian State," "Dionysian World," and "Dionysian Magic." Nietzsche speaks of Dionysus himself, and through Dionysus about himself, as the "suffering Dionysus" as well as the "philosopher Dionysus." Quotations on the Dionysian occur from Nietzsche's first to his final work, in both his published books and his unpublished notes. Yet the terminology seems to already indicate Nietzsche's inability to come up with a conclusive definition. This plurality of designations are indicative of the complexity of the concept. But they also show, in my view, that Nietzsche considers the Dionysian to be important enough to receive consistent attention. The Dionysian touches on so many domains that Nietzsche must consider it to be life's most powerful element, a claim he seems to make despite the difficulty of defining the element itself.

Yet, if Dionysus stands at the basis of all life, it is also true that Nietzsche changes his mind about the exact content of the concept. In the following, I will distinguish three different ways in which the Dionysian is defined in Nietzsche's work. These differences are subtle, yet not without significance. They explain the various interpretations of this notion, as well as the shifts in attitude towards Nietzsche by his critics. Again, my concern here is not so much Nietzsche's inconsistency as such. Some critics would hold that ultimately inconsistency on the Dionysian does not exist, and that Nietzsche's definition can be clear and consistent. Important for my analysis, however, is the statement that different interpretations are undeniably there, and that different critics emphasize different elements in the concept itself. Nietzsche's definition certainly leaves room for these divergences.

Nietzsche's initial conception of the Dionysian is that of a vital life force. In the original, more rudimentary definition, Dionysus is primal energy: it propels all that is alive to both create and destroy. On the level of human beings, it is the perpetual drive that animates us to live our lives. Dionyus stands for the animal side of man, his instincts and drives. In this sense, it can be said to be the opposite of the rational.

Though the second version is based on the first, it goes beyond this definition in that it attributes to the Dionysian drive the ability to sublimate itself.

In this version, the Dionysian may be said to contain elements of the Apollonian, and can thus transform itself, or enable its own transformation, into something higher. The primal energy is still there, yet it has found ways to connect with the Apollonian drive of representation. An element of artistic transformation, or at least the potential thereof, is already present in the Dionysian. In this case, Dionysus already contains Apollonian characteristics. The reverse is equally valid: Apollo contains Dionysian elements, but then in a purified state. This means that Dionysus is presented as an entity that already has the power to ally itself with the Apollonian. In this version, Apollo and Dionysus fuse as interdependent entities into one, with each entity harbouring qualities that can no longer be properly distinguished from one another.[7]

Thirdly, then, there is in Nietzsche the notion of the Dionysian as the unconditional affirmation of life (*Lebensbejahung*). Dionysus is still related to a primal force, yet the force has also somehow become the task (*dionysiche Aufgabe*) and the ability to affirm Dionysian reality. The Dionysian has become the highest degree in which acceptance of life, and the eternal recurrence thereof, can take place.

Before proceeding to a more detailed analysis of the different versions of the Dionysian, I should emphasize here that, as far as the elusiveness of the concept is concerned, my point of departure will be Martin Vogel's observation about the difficulty of interpretation:

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[7] Explicit references will be provided in the following pages.

> Das Wort „dionysich“ ist einer schlecht geprägten Münze vergleichbar. Es gehört nicht zu den Worten, die sich erst nach längerem Gebrauch abgeschliffen haben und unscharf wurden. Es zählt auch nicht zu den Worten, denen in der Umgangssprache ein neuer Sinn unterlegt wurde. Erst durch Nietzsche kam das Wort „dionysisch“ in die Umgangssprache und erwies sich sogleich als einer jener unscharfen Begriffe, mit denen man sich nicht verständlich machen kann (254).

My use of this quote in chapter one was primarily to indicate that the complexity of Nietzsche's key concepts often lies in their vagueness. An adequate definition of the Dionysian, for instance, does not exist. I should emphasize here that the concept itself lacks precision, not just because of Nietzsche, but also because of something inevitably contradictory in the Dionysian itself.

Throughout his analysis, Vogel, for the most part, implicates Nietzsche for this lack of precision, yet he leaves room for the inherent complexity of the concept itself. His quote contains the comparison of the Dionysian to a "badly forged coin." The value of the coin is hard to determine, not because it has been used over time, but because the initial imprint is not clear enough. Yet, as is also implied by the quote, the Dionysian may not have a proper imprint --it is also "einer jener unscharfen Begriffe, mit denen man sich nicht verständlich machen kann." Vogel argues here, as he does throughout his well-documented study, that Nietzsche's concept of the Dionysian lacks clarity from the moment that he introduces it. There is no second, altered meaning which has come to replace the original. From the start, there has only been a plurality of interpretations and the lack of a stable one.[8]

In the following, I will also explore this intuitive understanding of the Dionysian, which, as a basic human reality, seems to lead a life of its own. Once again, Nietzsche may have attempted to see the Dionysian in a special way, yet since the phenomenon is inscribed in human experience, the definition is bound to be too limited. My argument will be focused on Vogel's observation that the Dionysian has been generally domesticated, by critics and writers alike.

The reasons for this appropriative move are diverse: sometimes they seem personally motivated (the Dionysian as basic human reality is negated or nuanced), and sometimes more ideologically (Nietzsche's conception of Dionysus as the founding principle of existence, as another world behind a more apparent one, would relegate him to the domain of metaphysics). The more recent tendency to define Nietzsche's Dionysian ideas in terms of a fractured world of endless, new configurations, instead of something more concrete as the human instincts, seems to me an appropriation in its own right.

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[8] Vogel states: "Was die Dionysischen unter „dionysisch“ verstanden, läßt sich nicht in wenigen Worten sagen, dazu waren die Formulierungen nicht klar genug, gingen die Meinungen zu stark auseinander. Mit Nietzsche selbst stimmte kaum einer seiner Anhänger überein. Schon Jaspers wies darauf hin, daß Nietzsches Dionysos-Symbol niemand wirklich zu eigen geworden sei, so

Types of resistance to the Dionysian:
The first version: Dionysus as primal energy

Nietzsche's initial conception of the Dionysian, in my view, is characterized by two qualities that have generally obstructed understanding: its paradoxical nature and the intensity with which we are asked to understand it. In general, the Dionysian can be said to be the basic force of life. It is the fundamental energy or power that the world contains, though in itself it must remain invisible. Nietzsche refers to this concept with designations such as "[Kraft]," "Untergrund," "jenes Fundament aller Existenz" (Geburt, section 25), "Geburtschoß" (section 24). The "Dionysian world" is eternal: it is "eine (...) Welt des Ewig-sich-selber-Schaffens, des Ewig-sich-selber-Zerstörens."[9] Yet, the power, as the foundation of all life, also wills destruction. In an unpublished note from the 1880s, Nietzsche speaks of Dionysus in terms of "Vergänglichkeit" (related to the German verb *vergehen*, which in its older meaning is the equivalent of the English phrase 'to perish'), and of this "Vergänglichkeit" itself in terms of "Genuß der zeugenden und zerstörenden Kraft, als beständige Schöpfung."[10] Pleasure, procreation and destruction are named in one and the same breath.

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wenig wie der Übermensch, die ewige Wiederkehr und eigentlich alle positiv bestimmten und damit verengenden metaphysischen Seinssetzungen, welche Nietzsche vollzogen habe (...)" (252).

[9] Quotes are taken from *Die Geburt* and from the Nachlaß, III, 917 (Karl Schlechta, München: Karl Hanser Verlag).

[10] The full quotation reads: "Dionysos: Sinnlichkeit und Grausamkeit. Die Vergänglichkeit könnte ausgelegt werden als Genuß der zeugenden und zerstörenden Kraft, als beständige Schöpfung" (*Aus dem Nachlaß der Achtzigerjahre*, III, 497 (Karl Schlechta, München: Karl Hanser Verlag)). In this respect, also: "Das Verlangen nach Zerstörung, Wechsel, Werden kann der Ausdruck der übervollen zukunftsschwangern Kraft sein (mein Terminus dafür ist, wie man weiß, das Wort "dionysisch")", III, 493.

Dionysian power, then, is also cruelty. In fact, it is pleasure in cruelty. In the same note Nietzsche uses "Sinnlichkeit und Grausamkeit." The pure Dionysian condition, which either belongs to the world of the body or to that of the psyche, is the experience of ecstasy (all expressed in words such as "Rausch," "Verzückung," "Entzückung," "Überschwellen," etc.). It is the experience of power, and the joy one is said to feel in the use and abuse of that creative and destructive power. Dionysian joy is also excessive joy. It is the excess of power and life, and the excess one may feel and undergo in a state of ecstasy. In its physiological manifestation it is also instinct. In another famous note, Nietzsche states:

> Mit dem Wort „dionysisch“ ist ausgedrückt: ein Drang zur Einheit, ein Hinausgreifen über Person, Alltag, Gesellschaft, Realität, über den Abgrund des Vergehens: das leidenschaftlich-schmerzliche Überschwellen in dunklere, vollere, schwebendere Zustände; ein verzücktes Jasagen zum Gesamt-Charakter des Lebens, als dem in allem Wechsel Gleichen, Gleich-Mächtigen, Gleich-Seligen; die große pantheistische Mitfreudigkeit und Mitleidigkeit, welche auch die furchtbarsten und fragwürdigsten Eigenschaften des Lebens gutheißt und heiligt; der ewige Wille zur Zeugung, zur Fruchtbarkeit, zur Wiederkehr; das Einheitsgefühl der Notwendigkeit des Schaffens und Vernichtens.[11]

In this quotation, Nietzsche defines the Dionysian as a "drive," an "urge," an "instinct." Nietzsche uses "Drang," which is related to the English "drive." The drive is "seizing [something] beyond" consciousness (expressed in the adverbial complement *hinaus* and in the verb root *-greifen*). In fact, Dionysus as drive is the opposite of consciousness: it is a "painful" and "passionate" transgression of what is conscious into a fuller state of ecstasy. Both *Leiden* and *Schmerz* indicate pain, while *Leidenschaft* is passion. *Zustand* is a state of being, yet Nietzsche's state is "overly full," and "darker." *Schweben* expresses a free-floating movement. The drive is still "saying yes," yet the affirmation is done as in a "spasm" (the spasm is expressed in a sentence such as "ein verzücktes Jasagen"). It is interesting to observe how often Nietzsche uses words such as "Verzückung" and "Entzückung," or the adjectival form of these words, in relation to the Dionysian. *Verzückung*, as well as *Entzückung*, has its roots in the *Mittelhochdeutsch* "zuck," which, itself, is related to the English word "tug" and "twitch." *Zucken* is related to *ziehen*, which means "to pull." In its more colloquial definition, Zuck is also related to pain. In the *Früh-Neuhochdeutsch*, "entzücken" is the equivalent of "entreißen," which in English is "to take away with violence." Hermann Paul's etymological dictionary defines the verb "entzücken" as "der Besinnung berauben, so daß der Geist abwesend ist" (168). Bereft (=beraub[t]) of sense (=Sinn), the one that undergoes the state of *Entzückung* must enter a domain where the „spirit is absent."[12]

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[11] From *Aus dem Nachlaß der Achzigerjahre* (Carl Hanser Verlag Edition). This is entry no. 1050 of the *Die Wille zur Macht* compilation.

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[12] Paul's *Deutsches Wörterbuch* indicates: "**entzücken** (...) fnhd. noch im urspr. Sinn >entreißen< (...). Dazu bibl. wie schon mhd. in der Mystik entzückt werden >im Geist entrückt werden< (...) dazu *als Anschauung des Unermeßlichen betrachtet, erhebt sie* [die Andacht] *zwar die Seele, entzückt sie aber auch in einen Glanz* Herder. Danach ist dann **e.** >der Besinnung berauben, so daß der Geist abwesend ist<. Überwiegend, urspr. aber nicht ausschließlich knüpft sich daran die Vorstellung, daß eine angenehme Empfindung die Ursache ist. Ein Bewußtsein der urspr. Bed. zeigt sich z.B. in einer Stelle wie *eine Unterredung, die unsre Phantasie in einen der lieblichsten Träume entzückte Schi.; abwesend schein' ich nur, ich bin entzückt* Goe. (...) Gewöhnlich ist der Sinn heute sehr abgeblaßt, so daß man nur noch an die Erregung einer angenehmen Empfindung denkt. (...) Der substantivierte Inf. **Entzücken** stellt sich zu dem passivischen entzückt. Anschluß

At different places, Nietzsche speaks of Dionysian "Rausch," which is more commonly known. *Rausch* has its roots in sound and movement. It is related to the English "rush" as in "water and wind rush" and "a storm roars" (both *Rausch* and "rush" can be recognised in the Dutch "roes" and "ruis"). More recently, it has become equivalent with intoxication (in fact, Paul's dictionary describes it as "excitement caused by drinking").[13]

The relation between "Ver-/Entzückung" and "Rausch" is clear. Both seem to me indications that Nietzsche considers the Dionysian state to be something radically different from consciousness, which is usually referred to as *Wissen*, (*kleine*) *Vernunft*, or *Bewußtsein*. Nietzsche also speaks of "das Einheitsgefühl der Notwendigkeit des Schaffens und Vernichtens," yet this seems initially rather vague. "Einheit" must refer to the converging powers of creation and destruction, yet the necessity is acknowledged or "felt" ("gefühl[t]") on a bodily, and perhaps ecstatic, level rather than psychological.

At this point already, we might establish the difficulty of conceptualising notions such as "[ein] verzücktes Jasagen," which is usually referred to as *Erkenntnis*, and, in my view, always opposed to *Wissen* and *Vernunft*. *Jasagen*, in its literal sense, must belong to the domain of the rational, yet with Nietzsche affirmation of life takes place in a state of fully-fledged *Entzückung*. "Verzücktes

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an die urspr. Bed. bei Schi.: *die starre tiefe Betäubung, worein er gleich dem gemalten E. versunken saß, als wär um ihn her die Welt weggeblasen.* Das Part. **entzückend** wurde im Barock aus dem relig. in den erotischen Bereich als Adj. übertr. und verblaßte vom 18.Jh. an mit immer weiterer Anwendung immer mehr" (227).

[13] "**rauschen** (...) (engl. *rush*): *Die* [toten Stimmen] *r. wie Flügel* (Beckett, Godo 65) (...) **Rausch** (...) dann auch *eine rauschende Bewegung*. Daraus das allein noch übliche (...) >durch den Trunk veranlaßter Zustand<, auf ähnliche Erregungen übertr. (...), (Paul 680).

Jasagen" with Nietzsche is more than claiming love of life. Love of life is attested in the epileptic pull of the body. When Nietzsche says yes, sense and spirit (*Sinn* and *Geist*) are absent. Affirmation of life is foremost accomplished through the body. For the body, Nietzsche generally uses "Leib" instead of the more spiritualised and Latin-based *Körper*. Both *Körper* and *Leib* refer to the body (*Leib* is related to the English noun "life" and to the German verb and noun *leben/Leben*), yet *Leib* is the older word. *Leib* has its roots in the old German, where it designates the body in its entirety *Körper* exists primarily in relation to *Geist*. It is significant that Nietzsche attempts to define the human spirit in terms of the body.[14]

Nietzsche's Dionysian, then, in its initial conception, is a "dangerous power" (*[eine] gefähr[liche] Macht*). In *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Nietzsche speaks of "Dionysian reality" as the deepest reality there is ("dionysische Wirklichkeit" (48)). Dionysian knowledge, which is also "true knowledge" ("Erkenntniss"), is "insight in the terrible truth": „die wahre Erkenntnis [ist] der Einblick in die grauenhafte Wahrheit“ (48). The Apollonian mask is meant to protect from the Dionysian gaze into the terror-inspiring, inner-essence of nature: "[eine] notwendige Erzeugung[...] eines Blickes ins Innere und Schreckliche der Natur" (55). In a famous passage from *Die Geburt*, Nietzsche compares Dionysus to the sun, and the dark spots when the eye is trying to stare into it, to "wholesome antidotes" protecting one from the terrors of its light:

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[14] "**Leib** (...), agerm. (engl. *life*), verw. mit *bleiben* und *leben*. (...) Wir sind jetzt gewohnt, immer *L.* in Ggs. zu *Seele* zu stellen, weshalb auch *L. und Seele* Umschreibung für den ganzen Menschen ist. Der älteren Sprache ist es geläufig, *L.* für die ganze Person zu gebrauchen (...)" (Paul 521).

> Wenn wir bei einem kräftigem Versuch, die Sonne ins Auge zu fassen, uns geblendet abwenden, so haben wir dunkle farbige Flecken gleichsam als Heilmittel vor den Augen: umgekehrt sind jene Lichtbilderscheinungen (...) das Apollinische der Maske, notwendige Erzeugungen eines Blickes ins Innere und Schreckliche der Natur, gleichsam leuchtende Flecken zur Heilung des von grausiger Nacht versehrten Blickes (55).

As a power and drive the unalloyed Dionysian stands for "this horrible mixture of sensuality and cruelty": "jener abscheuligen Mischung von Wollust und Grausamkeit" (2).[15] Nietzsche calls this the "actual witches' brew": "der eigentliche Hexentrank" (2). Elsewhere, Nietzsche, again, speaks of the destructive power of the Dionysian state in terms of "Verzückung": "[d]ie Verzückung des dionysischen Zustandes mit seiner Vernichtung der gewöhnlichen Schranken und Grenzen des Daseins" (48). Being is broken up, yet not so gently. Transgression, accomplished with violence and with mind-numbing joy, takes place through, and in the convulsive pull of the body.

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[15] Nietzsche compares the "Dionysian Greeks" to the "Dionysian barbarians": "(...) Aus allen Enden der alten Welt (...), von Rom bis Babylon können wir die Existenz dionysischer Feste nachweisen, deren Typus sich, bestenfalls, zu dem Typus der griechischen verhält wie der bärtige Satyr, dem der Bock Namen und Attribute verlieh, zu Dionysus selbst. Fast überall lag das Zentrum dieser Feste in einer überschwänglichen geschlechtlichen Zuchtlosigkeit, deren Wellen über jedes Familientum und dessen ehrwürdige Satzungen hinwegfluteten; gerade die wildesten

Nietzsche's primeval rape

In a startling passage from *Die Geburt*, Nietzsche describes the "eternal being's lust to be" ("die ewige Lust des Daseins"). The primeval being ("Urwesen") compels human beings to become one with its desire to be, with its desire to "procreate" ("[V]erschmelz[ung] mit dessen Zeugungslust"). Yet, the union amounts to rape, since compliance is "exacted," "forced." The *Urwesen* lures man into the questionable "comfort" of a furtive yet close experience with an eternal reality ("ein metaphysischer Trost reißt uns momentan aus dem Getriebe der Wandelgestalten heraus"). Eternal being offers man the joys of a self-destructive union (Nietzsche says: "in dionysischer Entzückung ahnen [wir] die Unzerstörbarkeit und Ewigkeit dieser Lust"). The full quote reads:

> (Auch die dionysische Kunst will uns von der ewigen Lust des Daseins überzeugen: nun sollen wir diese Lust nicht in den Erscheinungen, sondern hinter den Erscheinungen suchen.) Wir sollen erkennen, wie alles, was entsteht zum leidvollen Untergange bereit sein muß, wir werden gezwungen, in die Schrecken der Individualexistenz hineinzublicken -und sollen doch nicht erstarren: ein metaphysischer Trost reißt uns momentan aus dem Getriebe der Wandelgestalten heraus. Wir sind wirklich in kurzem Augenblicken das Urwesen selbst und fühlen dessen unbändige Daseinsgier und Daseinslust; der Kampf, die Qual, die Vernichtung der Erscheinungen dünkt uns jetzt wie notwendig, bei dem Übermaß von unzähligen, sich ins Leben drängenden und stoßenden Daseinsformen, bei der überschwänglichen Fruchtbarkeit des Weltwillens; wir werden von dem wütenden Stachel dieser Qualen in demselben Augenblicke durchbohrt, wo wir gleichsam mit der unermeßlichen Urlust am Dasein eins geworden sind und wo wir

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Bestien der Natur wurden hier entfesselt, bis zu jener abscheuligen Mischung von Wollust und Grausamkeit, die mir immer als der eigentliche „Hexentrank" erschienen ist" (2).

> die Unzerstörbarkeit und Ewigkeit dieser Lust in dionysischer Entzückung ahnen. Trotz Furcht und Mitleid sind wir die Glücklich-Lebendigen, nicht als Individuen, sondern als das eine Lebendige, mit dessen Zeugungslust wir verschmolzen sind.

It is interesting to see here how Nietzsche describes the Dionysian state, and the methods Dionysus uses to convince human beings of its power. The Dionysian über-zeugt (*überzeugen* is normally "to convince" and "to persuade," yet more literally *zeugen* is also "to produce"). *Überzeugen*, then, evokes *zeugen* in the sense of "to produce and to raise in abundance" (*über-zeugen*). In fact, the faceless and impersonal "it" is the acting subject: "[es] (über)-zeugt uns," in which *zeugen* is like *ziehen* (which means "to pull" and implies a rather vigorous action). Dionysus is foremost a vigorous and sensual power that "pulls" and "produces" in an excessive fashion ("overly").

It is hard to deny that the quote has a strongly erotic quality. The acquisition of Dionysian knowledge is like an initiation, yet the initiation, once again, is violent. Knowledge of the primeval being, who is surely a masked seducer (*ein Kunst-trieb*), takes place through a forceful process of communion. Man is being consumed, if in a few instances only, by the eternal being's "unbändige Daseinsgier" and "Daseinslust." A little later, Nietzsche speaks of "Zeugungs[-]" and "Urlust." *Gier* and *Lust* belong to similar semantic fields, and both have a sexual connotation. Both imply a strong physical craving for something else. *Gier*, in particular, evokes the image of a predator eagerly gulping down its prey. The *Duden* dictionary speaks of *Gier* in terms of "uninhibited" and "blind" desire. In using qualifiers such as *heftig*, *maßlos* and *ungezügelt*, the dictionary's definition emphasizes the intensity of the feeling:

> (...) auf Genuß und Befriedigung, Besitz und Erfüllung von Wünschen gerichtetes, heftiges, maßloses Verlangen; ungezügelte Begierde.

Gier is related to the German noun *Begierde*, which figures in an expression such as "fleischliche Begierden" and which refers in most cases to sexual desire (*Begier* or *Begierde* is related to the Dutch noun "begeerte," which is used in a sentence such as "zinnelijke begeerte," and which has its equivalent in English designations such as "lust," "desire," "appetite").[16] It should be noted that both *Gier* and *Begier* mean desire, yet that *Gier* is a type of desire that, in a sense, has lost its human qualities. Man may control his *Begierde*, yet not his *Gier*.[17]

Interesting also is the relation between "Dasein" and "Zeugung," which as qualifiers are somehow interchangeable here. Nietzsche also uses the adjective „unbändig" in relation to *Gier* and *Lust*. The original meaning of *bändig* is "leashed," and it used to be primarily reserved for the leashing of animals.[18] Nietzsche literally says: "we feel [and in fact become one with] the primeval being's unleashed greed to be." In a sense, *unbändig* itself is repeated in words that indicate a state that has no limit or barrier, words such as "Übermaß," "unzählig," and "unermeßlich." All these words imply a state of excess. In this context, we can also consider the adjective "überschwänglich[...]." A correct translation of "überschwängliche Fruchtbarkeit" would be "excessive fertility," yet the German, in my opinion, is more evocative and less abstract than its English, Latin-based, counterpart. A more literal translation of the noun "Fruchtbarkeit" would be "fruitfulness." *Überschwänglich* as qualifier evokes the image of a liquid material that overflows the edges of the container that holds it.[19] Etymologically *überschwänglich* is also related to the predicate *schwanger*, which means "pregnant" (the verb *schwängern* is "to impregnate").

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[16] Paul's dictionary indicates: "**Gier** ahd. *girī*, mhd. *gir(e)* aus einem jetzt verlorenen Adj. *ger* oder *gir(e)* gebildet, aus dem auch (...) *begehren* abgeleitet ist; auf den Menschen bezogen urspr. >Wille, Begehr<; daneben vom tierischen Verlangen (mhd.): *beleckt sich voll g. die durstenden lefzen* (...); danach seit dem Fnhd. intensiviert zu heutiger Bed. >heftiges Verlangen<, i.Ggs. zu *Begierde* mit dem Begriff des Animalischen, dazu *Blutg.;* häufig i.S.v. >Macht-, Besitzstreben< (...)."

[17] Duden uses the following examples for the German *Gier*: "hemmungslose, blinde G[ier] stieg in him hoch; er war von unersättlicher G[ier] nach Macht und Geld besessen" (610).

[18] "**bändigen** abgel. aus einem bis ins 17.Jh. vorkommenden Adj. *bändig* (jetzt noch in (...) *unbändig*), zunächst nur von Tieren >am Band festgehalten<, daher >leitbar< (...)" (Paul: 92).

The final part of the quote is definitely the most interesting for our analyis. Nietzsche understands "Qual," which is "pain" and "suffering," in relation to "(Ur-)lust" ([primeval] lust) to be the necessary components of true Dionysian knowledge. Pain, suffering and lust are the states of being man is forced to undergo by the "rage" of the eternal being. Nietzsche speaks of its "wüten(-den Stachel"). Nietzsche uses the noun *Stachel*, as in "de[r] wütend[e] Stachel," to indicate its destructive qualities.

Yet, *Stachel* also has a distinctly sexual connotation: the verbs *aufstacheln* and *anstacheln* indicate a prodding movement (*aufstacheln* [or *stacheln* by itself]) can also be used in the sense of "to rouse").[20] Nietzsche uses the verb

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[19] "**Überschwang** mhd. überswanc, zu schwingen, urspr. >was sich über den Rand schwingt<, >überströmende Fülle< (...)" (Paul: 925).

[20] "**anstacheln** (...) übertr. >anreizen, anspornen (...)" (Paul: 45).

"durchbohr[en]" (which is "to pierce," "to run through" (*bohren* is literally "to drill") to indicate that the piercing movement is all-consuming and complete. In this context, it is interesting to see to what extent this quote hinges on the German prefix *ein-*, which is different from the preposition *in*. *Ein-* emerges in a word such as „hin*ein*[...]blicken," yet the sound is evoked throughout the entire quote: "Dasein," "Erscheinung," "eins," etc. *Ein-* can be used in combination with many verbs and nouns, and in these cases it implies a movement of breaking through to something else. It suggests transgression and force. Nietzsche, for instance, uses the evocative verbs "drängen[...]" and "stoßen[...]," yet both verbs can be used with the prefix *ein-*, and in both cases the action is one of forceful penetration.

Yet, violence is never just negative in Nietzsche. The verbs *auf-* and *anstacheln*, both evoked by the noun *Stachel*, already indicate that the movement is one of provocation. Ultimately, the movement is the seduction by a power that man cannot resist. The verbs Nietzsche uses to describe the union between man and the primeval being are indicative of man's wish, or even desire, to be subdued: Nietzsche speaks of "eins [werden]" and "verschm[e]lzen." Man "melts together" with the primeval being's "eternal lust," and the union takes place in a state of ecstasy ("Entzückung").[21] Nietzsche uses the words "Entzückung" and "Glücklich" to describe this otherworldly type of happiness man experiences when undergoing the state of annihilation. Happiness in *Die Geburt* is always ecstatic happiness. It is also the total disintegration of the self, and it is total submission.

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[21] Kees Vuyk in his Dutch translation of *Die Geburt* (*De Geboorte van de Tragedie*. Amsterdam: 1987) is even more explicitly sexual: *Zeugungslust* is translated by 'orgasm': „Op hetzelfde ogenblik, waarop wij als één geworden zijn met de onmetelijke levenslust en waarop wij in Dionysische extase de onverwoestbaarheid en de eeuwigheid van deze lust beseffen, worden wij doorboord door de razende angel van dit lijden. Ondanks angst en medelijden zijn wij de gelukkig-levenden, niet als individuen, maar als het *ene* levende, in wiens orgasme wij versmelten (103).

The difficulties of appropriation

It is clear that the way in which the Dionysian is described here is problematic: human beings and even life itself are explained in terms of savage drives. At the basis of human life must stand this mixture of sensuality and cruelty, this doubtful pleasure obtained from power and aggression. Even if contained by the Apollonian counter-drive, it remains difficult to acknowledge that the Dionysian is the basis of all life, or the basis of all art for that matter (Nietzsche speaks of the *Geburtschoß*). Only reluctantly does one admit that it is in fact a cruel and sadistic force that rules the world. That force, because of its sheer power, cannot be subdued or contained --only channelled, if at all, into a particular direction.

There is a strongly deterministic element in this particular conception of the Dionysian. *Das Urwesen* takes over, there where man stands helpless. In fact, it takes over man's entire being: the union between man and the primeval force is not a union between equals. Man has no choice. *Die Geburt* evokes the image of nature as a vampire that deprives its victims of their human qualities:

> Singend und tanzend äußert sich der Mensch [jetzt] als Mitglied einer höheren Gemeinsamkeit: er hat das Gehen und das Sprechen verlernt und ist auf dem Wege, tanzend in die Lüfte emporzufliegen (...). Der Mensch ist nicht mehr Künstler, er ist Kunstwerk geworden: die Kunstgewalt der ganzen Natur, zur höchsten Wonnebefriedigung des Ureinen, offenbart sich hier unter den Schaudern des Rausches (Secion 1).

Man no longer "walks" and "speaks" like a normal human being. Instead of having the ability as "Künstler" to objectify art, nature has now turned the artist himself into a petrified object.

One of the more interesting observations about *Die Geburt* is the erotic quality of its imagery, especially in relation to the Dionysian. As exemplified in the quote, Nietzsche uses an array of words and images that are very graphic and evocative, and that have a forthright sexual connotation. Indicative of this strategy, in my opinion, is his preference for words with Germanic roots, as opposed to the more abstract words that have a Latin origin (*Leib* instead of *Körper*). Rather startling, in my view, is what might be called "sado-masochistic" current that runs through the quotation, and which is present in *Die Geburt* as a whole. This quote, in particular, evokes the image of one force slowly overtaking another. As said, the union between man and his counterpart is definitely not a union between equals. Man is literally crushed by the excessive powers of his seducer.

Yet, at the same time, it is also true that man is seduced. Man is being lured into an experience that will annihilate the integrity of his unified self. And here, a certain perversity is introduced: man ultimately wills his own annihilation. In fact, Nietzsche states that he obtains the highest degree of pleasure from complying to the "raging sting" of the primeval being, a power which, it should be noted, reduces man to less than nothing. Becoming one with the hunger and lust of the eternal takes place on the level of the highest ecstasy, not despite, but because man is forced to undergo it. The quote is clear: true Dionysian knowledge is acquired by submitting to the rape committed by the dark forces of nature.

The problem is often one of degree. Judging from *Die Geburt*, Dionysian knowledge is definitely not the all too eager --and often naïve-- avowal of life as it is. Nietzsche's *Erkenntnis* of the world is steeped in pain and ecstasy. Accepting life seems to take place in a state of delirium, aroused by mind-numbing pain and mind-numbing joy. This is somehow hard to either accept or to conceptualise.

An additional problem is one of methodology. The way in which the Dionysian is described here turns Nietzsche into a thinker concerned with metaphysical certainty. Even in the previously analysed quotation, Nietzsche speaks of "metaphysical comfort" ("metaphysischer Trost") as an antidote to the pains of life. Man becomes one with the eternal energy that underlies the world of appearances, and this eternal truth provides comfort. Terms such as *Geburtschoß*, *Untergrund* and *Fundament* indicate that Nietzsche's concern in *Die Geburt* is definitely metaphysical: behind this world of appearances, in the quotation referred to as "Getriebe der Wandelgestalten," Nietzsche discovers a second realm of being, a world with cruel yet at the same time very stable laws. Indicative of this metaphysical concern is also Nietzsche's almost obsessive use of words with the prefix and adjective *Ur-* (*Urwesen*, *Urlust*, etc.), which besides "primitive" or "primeval" can also be used to express a reinforcement of the noun it qualifies, that is, as emphasis of its authenticity. Interestingly enough, this was a popular way of expressing oneself among students at the turn of the century.[22] *Ur-* as in *Urlust*, for instance, is a qualifier that besides origin also refers to a more authentic type of desire. In this sense, the prefix *Ur-* is the equivalent of "deep," "true."

Remarkable is also Nietzsche's talent to subvert (or should one say pervert?) predominantly Christian terminology, and use it as an instrument to promote what might be termed a profoundly pagan world view. This is clearly demonstrated in the previous quotation, yet it stands in my opinion for *Die Geburt* as a whole. Attempts to subvert Christian terminology and concepts occur throughout Nietzsche's oeuvre as a whole (as prime examples stand works like *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and *The Antichrist*), yet the subversion in these works is more explicit. I would hold that *Die Geburt* is not explicitly anti-Christian: in a way, its subversion is more insidious. Nietzsche uses words that have a clearly biblical or religious connotation, such as "Trost," "Qual," "Fruchtbarkeit," "Glück" and "Entzückung." Designations such as "Urwesen," "unermeßlich" and "das eine Lebendige" evoke the Alpha and the Omega of the Judeo-Christian faith. Even the formulaic construction "wir sollen" echoes the tone of the moral obligations prescribed in the Old and the New Testament.

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[22] „**ur-** (...) [es dient] Adjektiven zur Verstärkung (...) in der Studentenspr. war es bes. beliebt (...)“ (Paul: 951).

Yet, as mentioned earlier, the subversion is somehow more insidious: *Trost* is metaphysical comfort (the certainty of an eternal world behind this world of appearances) both in Christianity and with Nietzsche. Yet, whereas Christianity speaks of redemption through the Cross and the Blood, Nietzsche speaks of *Trost* as a slow surrender to the eternal being's *Gier* and *Lust*. Mystical union with Christ becomes the ecstasy of Dionysian *Entzückung*. The nails of the Cross are the "wütend[e] Stachel" of the quotation, yet the movement of piercing through leads to rapture and a true sense of nature's cruel side.[23]

Nietzsche's real perversion may very well reside, unconsciously or intentionally, in this fusion between Christian and pagan premises. Nietzsche's paganism in *Die Geburt* holds on to the well-known Christian markers of metaphysical comfort, sacrifice and mystical union, yet he approaches these concepts from the point of view of (sexual) desire. In fact, it seems as if Nietzsche explains the core concepts of Christianity itself in terms of sublimated pagan drives. Metaphysical comfort is thus perhaps revealed as a drive to be subdued (in fact annihilated) by an all-consuming power rather than as an attempt to be saved.

However, Nietzsche's own definitions can be said to be part of a sublimated and spiritualized version of desire. The quotation, for instance, is full of allusions to the realms of the sensual and the sexual, yet ultimately everything takes place on a spiritual level: Nietzsche speaks of the verbs "erkennen," "dünken" and "ahnen," and only once, in this quotation, of "fühlen." Union and submission still take place on the level of the spirit. Knowledge, etymologically related to verbs such as *erkennen* and *dünken*, it still prevails over the body. Nietzsche could have used words such as *spüren*, *erleben* or *empfinden* to express the nature of the Dionysian experience. Ultimately, Nietzsche, too, delimits the power of the Dionysian. And this is where religion can be said to sneak up on Nietzsche himself: Nietzsche holds on to the major concepts of Christianity. Dionysian *Entzückung* is a mystical experience of the eternal being's power. Nietzsche's union is sacrifice. His comfort a metaphysical comfort provided by the certainty of another world beyond the uncertain one he lives in.

I have introduced the previous section by referring to what I have termed types of resistance to the Dionysian, both to the more intuitive understanding of the concept and to Nietzsche's interpretation of it. The reason why should become clear now. Many critics and writers, and then especially Nietzsche's earlier interpreters, have dealt with his concept of the Dionysian in terms of this primordial energy, this life force made up of both harmful and salutary elements. For these critics and writers, the force may have been ambiguous, yet its overall effect was necessary and positive. Giving in to the power of the Dionysian, which became the equivalent of listening to one's instincts, meant leading a truer life. The Dionysian became synonymous with freedom, freedom from the constraints and conventions imposed by society. A Dionysian life-style in terms of a more

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[23] It would be fair, of course, to also claim that Christianity itself holds on to a few pagan rituals or

instinctual attitude towards life (instincts became the manifestation of the Dionysian on the level of human beings) was envisaged and deemed possible. Dionysus became Romanticism's nature, though nature had become internalized nature within human beings. The instincts had come to replace the pastoral, yet they, too, were innocent because pure. The world of the senses may have been less uncritically acclaimed (after all, Nietzsche also speaks of cruelty), yet it was still considered to be more authentic than that of the spirit. The senses were a direct expression of life. The Dionysian stood for a life uncontaminated by the rigours and distortions of reason.

Yet, as indicated in the previous quote, Nietzsche's Dionysian is no pastoral place. Purity has nothing to do with Dionysus. If anything, purity is an aesthetic judgement, and thus perhaps more an Apollonian designation. Purity and authenticity are indicative of feelings of nostalgia for an Apollonian world of order. Dionysus is impurity. If we take the quote as representative of Nietzsche's initial conception of the Dionysian, and I think that to a certain extent one can, then the Dionysian is downright sadomasochism: in Nietzsche's world man is attacked by the eternal forces of *Lust* and *Gier*. Human beings are forced into submission, yet there is a point where they no longer care. Human beings play the game of seduction no less willingly than the perpetrator. Nietzsche is master in this world of appearances, yet slave in a deeper, and definitely more exciting, world behind this. And the seducer is a masked seducer --his or her power is concealed. We have seen that the Dionysian reveals itself in a state of *Entzückung*.

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premises. There is also the mystical tradition in Christianity.

Though it is difficult to find an equivalent that renders the exact meaning of this word, it is related to extreme states of the body such as pain, ecstasy and joy. Nietzsche's Dionysian joy is so intense that it must literally 'pull,' as in the older German word *zuck*, and 'tear' the body apart.

It is clear from this that some of Nietzsche's ideas are difficult to accept without compromising them. There is first and foremost the problem of assimilating Nietzschean imagery. Even today, Nietzsche's mixture of biblical and pagan phraseology (predominantly Christian terminology is subverted, and redefined in terms of desire, and, ultimately also, assault) may strike one as extreme. Nietzsche's *Trost* has a rather bitter taste, if true human solace is to be found only in a situation where human beings are deliberately consumed by a foreign and destructive power, to the point of being totally taken over.

In terms of animals, Nietzsche's Dionysian is the vulture as opposed to the eagle. The *Geier*, as a symbol so important in *Die Geburt*, is related to the German adjective and noun *gierig* and *Gier*. Mariëtte Willemsen in her book speaks of the vulture as being linked with "hebzucht, vraatzucht en lafhartigheid" (91).[24] The vulture feeds on the flesh of dead animals, and when confronted with this fact of life, no matter how naturally disposed one may be, it generally causes a feeling of discomfort.[25]

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[24] Willemsen writes: "Ik denk dat Nietzsches keuze voor een gier in plaats van voor een adelaar een andere, tamelijk voor de hand liggende reden heeft. De adelaar is een koninklijke, voorname vogel. Moed en kracht zijn zijn eigenschappen. De naam van deze vogel is een voorteken van zijn edele natuur. De gier daarentegen is verbonden met hebzucht, vraatzucht en lafhartigheid. Hij doet zich bij voorkeur tegoed aan kadavers -alsof hij niet de macht en de moed heeft zelf een prooi te vangen. (En ook hier is de naam een voorteken. Gieren zijn *gierig* zowel in de zin die dit woord in het Nederlands meestal heeft ('vrekkig') als in de gangbare Duitse betekenis ('gulzig') - betekenissen die met elkaar te maken hebben: wie niets wil weggeven, wil alles zelf naar binnen werken, en andersom)" (*Kluizenaar zonder God: Friedrich Nietzsche en het verlangen naar bevrijding en verandering*, 1997).

Dionysus' messenger, *Silenus*, passes the Dionysian truth on to his capturers with a shrill laughter --the best thing for us humans is to die soon. Nietzsche uses the adverbial phrase "unter gellem Lachen" to describe the way in which the deity responds to the King's provocations. Perhaps it is less the truth, though the truth is far from comforting, than this otherworldly sound of the laughter that causes a type of discomfort much the same as one experiences with the vulture and the decomposing flesh. Nietzsche uses the German adjective "gell," which is related to the English "yell" (and to the Dutch noun "gil." It stands for a sharp and piercing sound. Nietzsche's unsettling words pierce like knives:

> Starr und unbeweglich schweigt der Dämon, bis er, durch den König gezwungen, endlich unter gellem Lachen in diese Worte ausbricht: „Elendes Eintagsgeschlecht, des Zufalls Kinder und der Mühsal, was zwingst du mich dir zu sagen, was nicht zu hören dich das Ersprießlichste ist? Das Allerbeste ist für dich gänzlich unerreichbar; nicht geboren zu sein, nicht zu sein, nichts zu sein. Das Zweitbeste aber ist für dich --bald zu sterben (29).

Important elements here include the poetic and playful combination of words and appositions, as well as the play on the German negation "nicht." A free yet accurate translation of one of the final sentences would be: "Best of all [for you little man would be] to have not been born, to have not been there, to have been nothing at all." The appositions evoke a vortex of annihilation.

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[25] Willemsen links the Dionysian with the vulture: "De gier die de mensenvriend Prometheus belaagt, symboliseert dus de ondraaglijkheid van het bestaan. Of ook: de gier is de manifestatie

Similarly, *der tolle Mensch,* who is the actor in one of the most famous passages of *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (III, 125), "incessantly cries out" his truth of total disorientation and disintegration. Nietzsche uses the verb "schreien" which is related to the English verb and noun "(to) shriek." The sound of a shriek is the sound of the deity's [*geller Lach*]: the sound that comes from a loud, high-pitched voice. The endless screams evoke a picture of sound without understanding, of fury without reason. The madman is Nietzsche's Dionysian vulture, obsessed with the "decomposition of the gods." His attitude is thoroughly perverse in that he returns to the churches, on the very same day he has preached their complicity in the killing of their god, to experience even more intensely the decay of the divine body. And this while enthusiastically "breaking into" the noisy shrieks of his own "Requiem aeternam deo":

> Man erzählt noch, dass der tolle Mensch des selbigen Tages in verschiedene Kirchen eingedrungen sei und darin sein Requiem aeternam deo angestimmt habe. Hinausgeführt und zur Rede gesetzt, habe er immer nur diess entgegnet: „Was sind denn diese Kirchen noch, wenn sie nicht die Grüfte und Grabmäler Gottes sind.“

Deep truths in Nietzsche are never just simply passed on. They are *zugeraunt*; that is, whispered from the innermost being of the self. The truth of

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van het verschrikkelijke lijden dat inherent is aan het leven. Of, nog iets anders gezegd: de gier is eternal recurrence, for instance, is one such truth which is *zugeraunt*. *Zuraunen* as a verb meas to whisper, yet the words that are whispered in this fashion spring from the body rather than from the mind. *Zuraunen*, like shrieky laughter, and the shrieks themselves, has lost its human qualities. It is the language of what Nietzsche defines as *Leib* as opposed to *Körper*, the language of the unconscious and of the instincts. Words that are 'driven' as evoked in the German *Trieb*.[26]

Paglia: a post-Nietzschean critic

At this point, it is interesting to mention a few representatives of this line of thought; that is, to discuss a few critics for whom Nietzsche mainly constituted this challenge of the Dionysian in its purer version. I think this is also necessary, given the fact that much recent Nietzsche criticism ignores this side of Nietzsche and of Nietzsche interpretation. In the previous chapters, we have seen that Nietzsche has served many a cause, and that the approaches of the different interpreters are usually exclusive of others. A prime example of this practice, in my opinion, is a recent article by William Connolly, which deals with the Nietzschean side of Michel Foucault.[27] Though not the only one of its kind, this

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een afbeelding van het barbaarse, titanische, dionysische. (...)" (Willemsen: 92).

[26] Paul speaks of a „secret" that is whispered: **raunen** >murmeln< (...) >Geheimnis< ((...) *Rune): Ahndevoll raunt sie vom anderen Land* (George, Die Ebene)" (Paul: 680).

[27] William E. Connolly: „Beyond Good and Evil: The Ethical Sensibility of Michel Foucault" (In: *Political Theory*, Vol. 21 No. 3, August 1993 365-389). The article focuses on a post-Nietzschean ethical sensibility. The difficulty here, I would argue, is that what Connolly considers a Foucauldian sensibility does not always apply to Nietzsche.

article is particularly interesting in that Connolly so blatantly ignores the more ontological readings of Nietzsche. Once again, like many other interpretations, his is not necessarily wrong. His interpretation is, however, simply too exclusive (though the subject matter is far from simple). A typical example of Connolly's one-sided attitude toward Nietzsche is the following excerpt:

> A post-Nietzschean ethical sensibility (...) strives, first, to expose artifice in hegemonic identities and the definitions of otherness (evil) through which they propel their self-certainty; second, to destabilise codes of moral order within which prevailing identities are set, when doing so crystallizes the element of resentment in these constructions of difference; third, to cultivate generosity --that is, a 'pathos of distance'-- in those indispensable rivalries between alternative moral/ethical perspectives by emphasizing the contestable character of each perspective, including one's own, and the inevitability of these contestations in life; and fourth --as Foucault eventually endorsed-- to contest moral visions that suppress the constructed, contingent, relational character of identity with a positive alternative that goes some distance in specifying the ideal of political life inspiring it (372).

I am discussing this quotation at some length here, because it illustrates well the monopolizing sweep of the Nietzsche predicates the interpreters are prone to use. Connolly speaks in this quotation, as well as in his article in general, of a "post-Nietzschean sensibility." The quotation itself is based on the attempt at an exhaustive description of what this sensibility entails. Connolly provides four points, the third of which, in my opinion, corresponds with the conception of the Dionysian as *Lebensbejahung*, that is, as an attitude of indiscriminate acceptance of life as it is. For him the Dionysian is an understanding of life as beyond metaphysical certainty. Connolly speaks of the cultivat[ion] of a "pathos of distance," which, if I read it well, entails the acknowledging of competing truths and perspectives in a world where the one truth is absent. It is a world in which, where, truth is revealed to be a metaphysical construct, and where, on top of this, the inevitability of metaphysical construction making is also somehow acknowledged. This seems to me to correspond to what Nietzsche at one point terms the *dionysische Aufgabe*: man is no longer just the one who undergoes the Dionysian as force, he has to act now as well. Man becomes with Connolly Dionysian man (though the Dionysian as such does not figure in the article), or simply *Übermensch*.

Nevertheless, to call this "post-Nietzschean" is saying too much. Connolly, to support his argument, uses designations such as "the Nietzschean tradition," or he starts off with sentences such as "in Nietzsche's work." Yet, after having worked our way through a plurality of interpretations with widely divergent methodological premises, we can safely state now that these designations are forthright simplifications of Nietzsche's writing. Nietzsche's work has been discussed by thinkers from Heidegger to Jaspers and Derrida, and in all of these cases a different conception emerges of Herr Nietzsche, thoroughly supported, in each case, by a large number of highly pertinent quotes. It might not be the place here to discuss the difficulty involved in speaking of a "post-Nietzschean" era or tradition. One would probably need another chapter or book. Yet, the post-Nietzschean label, in my opinion, applies to whom-- and whatever comes after

Nietzsche, and not just to a Foucauldian or poststructuralist type of enterprise as Connolly seems to suggest.

As an effective counter-example stands Foster's book on literary modernism, in which he terms the writers he deals with "heirs to Dionysus." Foster indicates Thomas Mann and André Gide, in particular, as writers preoccupied with the "savage god" of Nietzsche's early philosophy.[28] Though Mann and Gide will return at a later point in my analysis, it suffices here to establish that both authors can be said to fit the "post-Nietzschean paradigm" as tightly as Connolly's Foucault. There is simply no homogeneity among the numerous heirs to Nietzsche.

Another prime example of a post-Nietzschean critic, with a very Nietzschean 'sensibility,' in my opinion, is Camille Paglia. I will speak of this critic in more detail for several reasons. The first is that her conception of the Dionysian, as elaborated in her remarkable book *Sexual Personae*, closely follows Nietzsche's own, with some interesting variations.[29] The content of her book is definitely Nietzschean from this perspective, as is, as I will argue, her style. A second reason is that she is a very recent interpreter, and that in this respect she may constitute an interesting counter-example to the more metaphysics-oriented criticism of the present time. The third reason is that Paglia resembles Nietzsche in more than one respect: she, too, is something of an iconoclast in that she challenges generally accepted beliefs. And she, too, has been accused of practising a popularized type of scholarship (Nietzsche's *Die Geburt* met with a similar criticism), and, where known, has been relegated to the margins of mainstream academia.

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[28] Foster's third chapter of his book is entitled: „From Nietzsche to the Savage God: An Early Appropriation by the Young Gide and Mann" (145-179). In this chapter, Foster provides a comparative analysis of Gide's *L'Immoraliste* and Mann's *Tod in Venedig*.

It should be noted, however, that Paglia's ideological sweep is very much like Nietzsche's own, and then especially when compared to the Nietzsche of *Die Geburt*. Her style is as sparkly as his, and, I maintain, her references to the lurid world of sex, blood and violence as numerous. In a passage which echoes the vivid descriptions of our previous Nietzsche quotation (*Die Geburt*, section 17), Paglia says:

> When the body's chthonian spasms take over, we are invaded by Dionysus. The uterine contractions of menstruation and childbirth are Dionysus' fist clenching in our bowels. Birth is expulsion, a rocky cascade of spasms kicking us out in a river of blood. We are skin drums which nature beats. Invitation to the Dionysian is a binding contract of enslavement to nature (95).

It is remarkable to see how closely Paglia's quotation follows Nietzsche's, and then especially from the point of view of its underlying cruel discourse. If anything, Paglia is even more explicit about what is still implicit in Nietzsche. Paglia's "chthonian spasms" are the epileptic pulls of the Nietzschean state of *Entzückung*. Paglia's *sparagmos* is Nietzsche's *Verstückelung*. Paglia states:

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[29] The third chapter of her book deals with Apollo and Dionysus. Though her analysis of the Dionysian ranges from examples in literature to those in everyday life, she also does pay some attention to Nietzsche.

"[t]he violent principle of the Dionysian cult is sparagmos, which in Greek means 'a rending, a tearing, mangling' and secondly 'a convulsion, spasm'" (95). Paglia, too, speaks of a violent initiation: Dionysus "invad[es]" and Dionysus "invit[es]." Yet, the initiation is not gentle: once lured into the magic world of Dionysian excitement (Paglia speaks of a "Dionysian dance"), human beings must completely surrender. Nature is a vamp, its naive victims reduced to zombies. Nature's contract is signed with blood, and the wager is conclusive. The "clenching fist" in Paglia echoes Nietzsche's furious "sting." The "kick" and "beat" echo the "furious stabs" of Nietzsche's primordial being.

A slight variation on Nietzsche's version of the Dionysian theme might be Paglia's emphasis on Dionysus' transvestism. For Paglia, Dionysus is intricately linked with woman and mother, in both an abstract and more literal sense. Paglia calls Dionysus the "god of fluids": Dionysian liquid is the material from which man and woman spring, and the material to which both must return. Paglia's "murky no man's land of matter half-turned to liquid" is reminiscent of the madman's obsession with the decomposing flesh of the gods, or of the Promethean vulture as opposed to the eagle. Paglia calls Dionysus a "female chthonian swamp inhabited by silent, swarming invertebrates" (92). At another point, she speaks of Dionysian reality in terms of the "slow suck of the swamp." The swamp and the vampire have similar connotations --both suck blood. And both lure their victims into a world of self-disintegrating excitement.

Yet, even here, Paglia may be said to closely follow Nietzsche's own observations. In *Die Geburt*, Nietzsche, too, emphasizes the solipsistic and female quality of Dionysian nature (in Paglia the female body stands for something unto itself):

> In der dionysischen Kunst und in deren tragischen Symbolik redet uns dieselbe Natur mit ihrer Wahren, unverstellten Stimme an: „Seid wie ich bin! Unter dem unaufhörlichen Wechsel der Erscheinungen die ewig schöpferische, ewig zum Dasein zwingende, an diesem Erscheinungswechsel sich ewig befriedigende Urmutter! (93).

In Nietzsche, too, Dionysian nature is presented as the primeval mother, and human beings as children that are subject to her will. Particularly interesting in Paglia's analysis, in my opinion, is her emphasis on what she terms the "sado-masochis[tic]" dimension of the Dionysian. Dionysus has the attraction of the vampire. The vampire does not just kill, it lures and kills. Its movement is a slow dance of total appropriation, the battle is a sad one between unequals. Nietzsche may still speak of *Geburtschoß* and *Fundament* in relation to his version of the Dionysian, yet, with Nietzsche, too, the power is aggressive, seductive and deceiving. Nietzsche's gaze is thoroughly Dionysian in that man has no choice but to be slowly consumed by this foreign and cruel power.

Paglia may be said, then, to follow the premises of a conception of the Dionysian which is based on its quality of a perfect opposition to its Apollonian counterpart. For Paglia, Dionysus and Apollo are the two poles situated at the far end of the same continuum of human experience. Dionysus is the body and

Apollo the brains. A force and counterforce that at some point may keep each other in check, yet that for the greater part remain profoundly unequal. And, once again, as I have argued, this bipolar quality of the Dionysus/Apollo paradigm, in which the two forces are strictly separate and constitute each other's counterpart, is also a Nietzschean premise.

Yet, whereas Nietzsche speaks of a perfect blend of the two forces in pre-Socratic tragedy and human beings (though ultimately in Nietzsche, too, as we have seen, there is no doubt about which force obtains the upper hand), Paglia emphasizes the existential inevitability of their struggle:

> Complete harmony [between the Apollonian and the Dionysian] is impossible. Our brains are split, and brain is split from body. The quarrel between Apollo and Dionysus is the quarrel between the higher cortex and the older limbic and reptilian brains (96).

As mentioned before, Paglia's vivid descriptions leave no doubt as to how the powers relate to each other: Dionysus prevails in a battle where the parties are of an all too unequal strength, and where the outcome is already decided beforehand. About the omnipotence and inevitability of the Dionysian condition of the human body, Paglia states:

> Sparagmos and metamorphosis, sex and violence flood our dream life, where objects and persons flicker and merge. Dreams are Dionysian magic in the sensory inflammation of sleep. Sleep is a cavern to which we nightly descend, our bed a musty burrow of primeval hibernation. There we go into trance,

> drooling and twitching. Dionysus is our body's automatic reflexes and involuntary functions, the serpentine peristalsis of the archaic" (98).

Other versions of the Dionysian

Following Paglia's version of a supreme and omnipotent Dionysian reality, we should pass on to a few other aspects of Nietzsche's conception of the Dionysian. As indicated, these aspects in one way or other present themselves in Nietzsche's philosophy, though in certain cases they are not always consistent with the previous elaboration of the Dionysian. Even in *Die Geburt*, it is not always clear how much authority Nietzsche wishes to attribute to the Dionysian, or how antithetical his relationship with the Apollonian is. Our previous analysis suggest that Nietzsche considers the Dionysian first and foremost to be a crushing power, and in this he seems to ally himself with a definition of the Dionysian which is more in line with a critic like Paglia (and to a certain extent with writers like Mann and Gide). Although we still hold this view about Nietzsche's profoundly Dionysian gaze (the fact that human beings are powerless before this force may be acknowledged despite himself), one should also acknowledge that Nietzsche attempted to refine this image of the Dionysian, or that he attempted to approach the problematic from a different perspective, that is, as a sublimated force within human beings. Nietzsche also speaks of the Dionysian in terms of an artistic power, and of the human drives that represent or channel it, as artistic drives. In this sense, the Dionysian, as power that seeks representation, has already managed to provide itself with elements that normally would belong to its Apollonian counterpart. Nietzsche, in this respect, speaks of a "Versöhnung" between the two powers.

In fact, as representation the Dionysian can only exist in relation to the Apollonian: nature in human beings, for instance, depends on a compromise. Nietzsche's "Greek Dionysian orgies," which are still Dionysian, are versions of the Dionysian which are mangled through the Apollonian mould of sublimation. Nietzsche's Dionysus is still a primal force, yet the force is now also vital, manageable, creative, and driven to artistic representation in and through humans. The force has now become an integrated, and no longer a separate, part of human beings themselves. A Dionysian human being is now also someone with distinctly Apollonian features, that is, features that govern, as force, whatever primal energy that emerges within him- or herself.

Peter Sloterdijk, in his study on Nietzsche as a "thinker on stage," in this respect, speaks of a "transfigur[ed]" type of Dionysian force[30]. The title of his book already refers to the power of the medium that governs Nietzsche's message: it is as if Nietzsche's thinking literally takes place on stage, and, as such, is governed by the laws of dramatic representation. Apollonian form is the rigid mould through which the Dionysian message, or in fact, any message, must take shape. And words already create distance. In fact, Sloterdijk argues that, beyond the rigours of form, Nietzsche's entire "Dionysian undertaking" (calling it a message would already make it subject to the Apollonian laws of representation) is based on a conception of the Dionysian that is ruled by the principle of Apollonian purification:

> After Doric precensorship and Apollonian resistance have done their job and erected adequate defenses, [Nietzsche's] fascination for the Dionysian component is able to reenter, a component that has now become completely music, completely dance, completely mystical participation and beautiful suffering --in short, every higher form of stepping outside of oneself that the reverential traditional term „tragedy" side-steps. Just as soon as a distance from the vulgar procession of the satyrs has been symbolically re-established, the transfiguration of the Dionysian begins anew. Bracketed within aesthetic parentheses and dramaturgical quotation marks, the singing he-goats are no longer libertines who regress to bestiality (30).

About the power dynamics between the two forces, Sloterdijk is quite clear: the "Dionysian Other" is a designation which already implies a dependence on that which stands opposed to it. It can never exist just by itself. As blind force, Dionysus has no form --it must ally itself with the powers of representation, if it wishes to be represented itself. Primal energy needs the body, and in the process it gets changed. Sloterdijk argues:

> In truth, the polarity between Apollo and Dionysus is not a turbulent opposition that vacillates freely between the two extremes; we are dealing much more here with a stationary polarity that leads to a clandestine doubling of the Apollonian. The Apollonian Unified Subject (Eine) makes certain, through the mechanism of the silently established axiom of balance, that the Dionysian Other never comes into play as itself, but only as

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[30] The full title is: *Thinker on Stage: Nietzsche's Materialism* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1989). I have used the translation, by Jamie Owen Daniel.

> the dialectical or symmetrical Other to the Subject. An Apollonian principle governs the antagonism between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. This permits us to understand why Nietzsche, although he presents himself as the herald of the Dionysian, at the same time perpetually appears with the demeanor of heroic self-control, to such and extent that what must control itself is named, emphasized, and celebrated as a Dionysian musical force --but always with the sort of emphasis whereby what is stressed remains under Apollonian control. Apollo is, even within Nietzsche himself, the ruler in the antithetical relationship with his Other (25).

The decisive point here, in my view, is Sloterdijk's definition of the transfigured Dionysian as the "dialectical or symmetrical Other to the Unified Subject." Paglia's alien and swarming nature must compromise in man and woman, and, as such, in its new configuration, obey the dialectical inevitability of resolution within human beings. However, Apollo, too, must change. The Apollonian powers of representation still prevail over their Dionysian counterpart. Yet, the Dionysian forces they now represent have made them lose the serenity of control that is merely self-evident. Apollo must now fight to gain control:

> In fact, Nietzsche's book on tragedy is almost always fixed to the apparent dimension of its contents and read as a Dionysian manifesto. However, a dramaturgical reading leads with the greatest possible certainty to the opposite conclusion. What Nietzsche brings forth upon the stage is not so much the triumph of the Dionysian as its compulsion toward an Apollonian compromise. Even this reading would seem somewhat scandalous when compared to the classical image of Greek culture, because it no longer recognizes the serene authority of Apollo as self-evidently given, but instead teaches it as representing a courageous victory over an alternative world of dark and obscene forces. This does not alter the fact that in Nietzsche, from the dramaturgical perspective, the Apollonian

> world of illusion has the last word --whether or not this illusion dances henceforth before our eyes with an infinitely deeper opalescence. It is almost as if the humanistic enthusiasts of Greek culture were suddenly being expected to acknowledge that this beautiful Apollonian man's world actually represented a Dionysian transvestite theatre and that, in the future, there could be no more relying on the edifying unequivocality of the Apollonian empire of light (24).

As mentioned previously, in order to co-exist and function within the complex configuration of the human body, both Apollo and Dionysus must transform themselves. Yet, in doing so, the forces lose a certain part of their identity. They become interchangeable: Dionysus contains Apollo, and Apollo in turn Dionysus. Nietzsche's juggling with labels that, ultimately, cover the same thing, is related to the fact that the Dionysian as wild force is transposed onto human beings. The Dionysian microscopic gaze reveals nature around us as a mad frenzy of cluttered and teeming organisms --an alien spectacle. Yet, when this nature is transposed onto human beings, it can no longer exist as just alien. Dionysus must change where the lens of the microscope focuses on the human body and soul.

And this is where Paglia must differ from Nietzsche. In her book, Paglia provides a convincing argument in favour of the omnipotence of the Dionysian. Human beings may attempt to oppose the alien forces of nature within, the attempt is doomed to fail. Apollo is a thin layer of bad faith.[31] Paglia's strength is the strength of this argument. The difficulty is also simply ideological: how do we conceive of human beings? As a split entity (that is, split between two forces) or as integrated and unified? Nietzsche, in my view, has always been concerned with an integrated type of human being. In the previous chapter, for instance, we have seen that knowledge is knowledge only when it is integrated within the human body; only when it is instinct.

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[31] A passage that renders Paglia's idea about the true power dynamics behind the façade of human control is the following quote: „Everything is melting in nature. We think we see objects, but our eyes are slow and partial. Nature is blooming and withering in long puffy respirations, rising and

Yet, even with Nietzsche, as I have attempted to demonstrate, full integration is always problematic. Nietzsche, too, is stuck with the censorship of his brains, with books, consciousness, thoughts, words, language. For Paglia, the situation is quite clear: she simply distinguishes between the body and the brain, the higher cortex, and the what she calls lower limbic parts of the brain. Dionysus is Dionysus and Apollo Apollo, and the two shall never truly meet. Though for some this solution of an existential inevitability may appear too simple, Nietzsche's persistent concern with incorporating what belongs to the spirit within the larger configuration of the body, proves that for him, too, the alternative solution of an integrated type of human being is equally problematic.

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falling in oceanic wave-motion. A mind that opened itself fully to nature without sentimental preconception would be glutted by nature's course materialism, its relentless superfluity. An apple tree laden with fruit: how peaceful, how picturesque. But remove the rosy filter of humanism from our gaze and look again. See nature spuming and frothing, its mad spermatic bubbles endlessly spilling out and smashing in that inhuman round of waste, rot and carnage. From the jammed glassy cells of sea roe to the feathery spores poured into the air from bursting green pods, nature is a festering hornet's nest of aggression and overkill. This is the Chthonian black magic with which we are infected as sexual beings; this is the daemonic identity that Christianity so inadequately defines as original sin and thinks it can cleanse us of. Procreative woman is the most troublesome obstacle to Christianity's claim to catholicity, testified by its wishful doctrines of Immaculate Conception and Virgin Birth. The procreativeness of Chthonian nature is an obstacle to all of

Nietzsche's Lebensbejahung and sense of play

Yet another dimension of the concept of the Dionysian is based on this notion of an integrated human being. Besides being a perfect balance between the opposing forces, the Dionysian now also entails the unconditional affirmation of this very state of being. The Dionysian thus changes into an attitude towards life. Nietzsche's Dionysus is now synonymous with what Nietzsche terms a philosophy of *Lebensbejahung* --the total acceptance of life as it is, the revelling in the searing pains of the human predicament, the joyous excavation of the Dionysian roots that ground and demystify the achievements of progress. *Lebensbejahung* is now also the human will to want the eternal recurrence of all things that make up being. In a section of his curious autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, in which is also a section in which he reviews *Die Geburt*, Nietzsche states:

> Das Jasagen zum Leben selbst noch in seinen fremdesten und härtesten Problemen; der Wille zum Leben, im Opfer seiner höchsten Typen der eignen Unerschöpflichkeit frohwerdend -- das nannte ich dionysisch, das verstand ich als Brücke zur Psychologie des tragischen Dichters. Nicht um von Schrecken und Mitleiden loszukommen, nicht um sich von einem gefährlichen Affekt durch eine vehemente Entladung zu reinigen --so mißverstand es Aristoteles--: sondern um, über Schrecken und Mitleiden hinaus, die ewige Lust des Werdens selbst zu sein

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western metaphysics and to each man in his quest for identity against his mother. Nature is the seething excess of being" (28).

> --jene Lust, die auch noch die Lust am Vernichten in sich schließt (...) (3).

Allan Schrift, in a section of his previously discussed study, speaks of Dionysian play, a concept he defines as the artist's "playing with rapture" as well as nature's "playing with man" (66). In Schrift's Nietzschean world, man plays with nature, and nature in turn with man. Yet, Nietzsche's concept of play, as we have seen before, is based on knowledge and on will --knowledge of the existential Dionysian paradigm, with its necessity of an Apollonian veil, and the subsequent will to want this reality (in fact, to want nothing more fervently than this reality). Dionysian man or woman (in Nietzsche's terminology the *Übermensch*) is thus steeped in play in that he or she wilfully chooses, if only temporarily, to ignore the terrors of a Dionysian reality. While this is happening, it should be noted, the Dionysian realizes that the choice is merely a playful choice. In a quote which links together the main tenets of Nietzsche's philosophy (an interpretive solution that falls within the critical parameters of Schrift's analysis), Schrift states:

> (...) we find that for Nietzsche, play is the highest form of human activity. As such, play is directed toward the overcoming of nihilism in that, through creative play, what is created are new values. The *Übermensch* takes on the significance of the superior player, the player from whom is issued the creative response to the devaluation of values. This is to say, the play of the *Übermensch* is playing with values, is transvaluing values. On this reading, will to power emerges as the creative capacity of humans and world for play, and the highest expression of this creative capacity, i.e., the *Übermensch's* transvaluation of all values, is the creation of a world as the structured interplay of

> will to power as creative force, that is, the creation of a play-world. The eternal recurrence designates this play-world as the structured interplay of the *Übermensch's* will to power and, as an existential challenge, raises the stakes of the game which the *Übermensch* plays to its highest limit: eternity (72).

In summing up the different aspects of the concept of the Dionysian, we may now establish that with Schrift, and thus also with the later Nietzsche, the Dionysian receives an important additional dimension. Though certain aspects of the Dionysian may have remained unmentioned in my analysis, the three versions discussed illustrate clearly which specific way the notion has developed over time. It may not always be so clear, yet Nietzsche's struggle is often a struggle about freedom. How free are human beings to determine the course of their lives is an underlying question that recurs in Nietzsche's work in several places. I would suggest that the different aspects of the Dionysian (I have treated them in the order as they appear in Nietzsche's work) reflect this underlying struggle in Nietzsche, and also the resolution that Nietzsche may have ultimately chosen. The Dionysian as primordial force, as power that violently yet seductively persuades man to realize the truth of his innermost being, reflects, in a way, a profoundly deterministic view of the world.

Nietzsche's later and more nuanced conceptions of the Dionysian attempt to move away from this reality. These versions attribute less authority to the Dionysian as primordial force (the second version already deals with a compromise), to such an extent that, in the final version, the Dionysian has come to signify the conscious affirmation of a Dionysian reality. As previously indicated, Schrift argues that play in Nietzsche is the highest degree of affirmation.

The power and agency of human beings are now increased since they understand their situation, and they now choose to literally play along (it should be noted that the artist in *Die Geburt* is more subject to the two powers than that he freely acknowledges them. In *Die Geburt*, Nietzsche states: "Der Mensch ist nicht mehr Künstler, er ist Kunstwerk geworden: die Kunstgewalt der ganzen Natur, zur höchsten Wonnebefriedigung des Ur-einen, offenbart sich [unter dem Zauber des Dionysischen] unter den Schaudern des Rausches" (1)).

Whereas in *Die Geburt* man is still ruled by his instincts, symbolized by their appearance under the prerogatives of the Olympian gods, in the final conception of the Dionysian, the instinct is transformed primarily into a will to play, to see life as play, and to affirm the necessity of considering life as play. Dionysus is still the truth, yet now it is emphasized, and in fact taken for granted, that man has the ability both to see and not to see the depths of his own being. And that in life he consciously plays this dialectical game of knowing and forgetting.

Man has thus acquired an enlightened degree of knowledge in that he fully realizes the tragic dimension of his own human condition, and knows how to act accordingly. He has now received the ability to create, not just because he must or because he is compelled to by some inner force, but also because he wilfully, in fact consciously, chooses to do so. Instead of merely undergoing the Dionysian state of disintegration, he now allows disintegration to take place by his own will. Man can be said to have acquired now himself the Olympian perspective of critical distance towards his own condition. In a sense, he has become his own god.

The important distinction of this later version, in my opinion, lies in its more intellectual quality. As Nietzsche states himself, the philosophy of *Lebensbejahung* is literally a "saying yes to life," with the emphasis on the verb "saying." Affirmation of life primarily takes place on the level of the intellect. Affirmation also allows knowledge of the Dionysian, that is, awareness on a cognitive level, to come through at all times, instead of leaving it as something which is only occasionally and temporarily revealed in an extatic moment of truth. In Nietzsche, too, despite an attempt to move away from the conscious mind, the intellect must gradually gain authority. Let me illustrate this point with an example. In *Die Geburt*, Nietzsche describes knowledge of the Dionysian truth in terms of a revelation, that is, as something that occurs, yet definitely not at all times. He states:

> (...) als welchem wir uns etwa zu denken haben, wie [der Rausch- und Traumkünstler], in der dionysischen Trunkenheit und mystischen Selbstentäußerung, einsam und abseits von den schwärmenden Chören niedersinkt und wie sich ihm nun, durch apollinische Traumeinwirkung, sein eigener Zustand, d. h. seine Einheit mit dem innersten Grunde der Welt in einem gleichnisartigen Traumbilde offenbart (2).

The quotation indicates to what extent the artist is still the passive object of a slow process of revelation. Awareness of the world as it is slowly occurs to him, and in certain situations only. Full realization is not presupposed at all times or simply taken for granted. Nietzsche's concept of affirmation or play requires that this type of awareness is always already there, that it is always already experienced at some level of the intellect, though also in some intricate way periodically ignored. Dionysian truth in *Die Geburt* is still something that is more alien to the conscious mind, precisely because it entails its very disintegration. This truth is also something from which, at least generally, the conscious mind should be safeguarded.

Interesting, from this perspective, is the emphasis on Nietzsche's resolution of the concept of play in more recent criticism. If Dionysus as playful affirmation, in order to be affirmation, presupposes knowledge of the world as it is at all times, and this instead of its dissolution, then there may be a shift towards a type of criticism that has restored the power of the conscious mind. As I have argued before, play is play only then when we know that the game is merely a game. This knowledge must take place on the level of the intellect. If it does not, then there is no way in saying whether one truly and wilfully affirms. Then, affirmation is a law to which one simply must comply, regardless of whatever conscious influence one wishes to exert. True and total affirmation, that is, Nietzsche's *Lebensbejahung*, is steeped in consciousness --it is the will, or in fact the degree in which one wills, to affirm life. Yet, the will as free will is valid only when one fully knows what this life entails.

There can be no decisive word on this issue. Nietzsche's concept of play is a true problematic in the sense that it cannot have a definite resolution. Ultimately, the difficulty is also simply the distinction that exists between the world of the body and that of the conscious mind. These worlds are somehow integrated within the complex system of the human body, yet they are also separate. Nietzsche's dilemma has the quality of an aporia: he wishes to move away from the intellect and the conscious mind, yet, ironically enough, the only way in which he can do this is through the intellect. The conceptualisation of Nietzschean affirmation, for instance, is problematic precisely because Nietzsche wants to say yes with a part of the body that exceeds the intellect. Nietzsche may be said to seek affirmation through the sub- or unconscious mind, yet this cannot be done without the sacrifice of what is conscious. Nietzsche, in a sense, wants both: he disclaims the authority of the conscious mind, yet, ironically enough, he does this on the sole authority of the intellect. For Nietzsche, it seems to me, one of the main difficulties is that man is steeped in consciousness. Claiming the authority of the unconscious mind must take place through consciousness. And claiming one's love of life, as a standard that determines the degree of authenticity of *Lebensbejahung*, is equally dependent on the intellect if true affirmation is a sign of strength of will.

A Dionysian Current:
Desire and the Exotic in Gide and Burroughs

An analysis

In the second part of this chapter, my point of departure will be this difficulty of an integrated human being, where the fusion of mind and body, reason and instinct are still somehow problematic. I will approach the concept of the Dionysian in this section from the perspective of our first definition, that is, as a power or force that may be recognized, yet that for the greater part remains hidden from the conscious mind. Just as Foster, I will be speaking of the Dionysian in a work of literature, yet, in contrast to this critic, I will indicate that the origins are not necessarily in Nietzsche. I will speak of a Dionysian current where Foster speaks of a Nietzschean. The difference in this analysis is that I will attempt to demonstrate that there is a conception of the Dionysian beyond Nietzsche's conception itself. That, in fact, there is a Dionysian current to be found in Nietzsche himself, a current that may exceed the parameters of his own definitions.

My point of departure will thus be this cruel discourse which underlies the Nietzschean text on the Dionysian as primordial force, a concept as elaborated in *Die Geburt*, and as illustrated in the first part of this chapter (I refer to one of the first sections of this chapter in which I have discussed the dynamics between primordial force and man in more detail). This particular conception of the Dionysian presents Dionysus, or what he stands for, not just as a powerful force, but as an aggressive party wilfully overtaking another. Nietzsche, as previously indicated, describes a spectacle of cruel assimilation. Aggression and submission between the parties are the necessary ingredients of a game whose outcome is decided beforehand. Human beings are forced to enjoy the slow process of disintegration of the self by a power that they literally cannot withstand. Nietzsche's nature rapes, and humans must passively comply.

In the following, I will argue that this cruel image of aggression and submission between two parties of an unequal nature emerges in many other texts. Yet, as in Nietzsche, it is primarily a discourse behind the surface of the text itself, which means that the cruelty of the image is never really explicit. This specific version of the Dionysian, that is, beyond Nietzsche's own, more conscious definitions, can be related to what Paglia terms "sado-masochism" --the cruel gaze that watches, and, in fact, despite itself, takes pleasure in observing how what is unblemished getting slowly stained. It is Nietzsche's "witches' brew," that is, this mixture of sensuality and cruelty, yet then defined in terms of the everyday and the normal instead of the excess that goes with Dionysian orgies.

The Dionysian in terms of a cruel and sensual force within, and no longer just relegated to the safe context of Dionysian orgy-like excess, is a truth that for most of us is hard to swallow. It imposes itself or is perceived as one of the most basic truths of existence, and, as such, it defies the concept of a fully integrated human being. The simple truth is that desire is hard to control. It is a cruelty within that must be suppressed, both literally and subconsciously, also simply because it is harmful to the perception that human beings have of themselves. In fact, one could argue that this force cannot but exist in relation to its own domestication and re- or suppression. And yet, suppression does not make this version of Dionysian desire disappear. As previously mentioned, it resurfaces in different ways and under different guises. Words may sublimate and delude in that they render this power within less harmful. Yet it is questionable whether, in this case, true sublimation in the sense of full integration and acceptance can take place.

In the following, I will also speak of the exotic. Its relation to the Dionysian is clear. Antiquity knew Dionysus as the stranger god (though not so strange as to not know him). I will understand the exotic primarily in relation to the Dionysian as we have previously defined it --as a force within which is both alien and close to human beings. By this I mean that there is an awareness of what this force entails, yet that it must remain implicit and hidden. I will speak of the exotic as that part which remains both strange and familiar to the conscious self. I will also speak of the degree to which sublimation, which at this stage is still defined in terms of integration and domestication, takes place.

Subject to analytical scrutiny in this particular section will be André Gide and William Burroughs, two authors in whose work the Dionysian as well as the exotic have played such prevalent roles. Having taken on, at this stage, the role of a psychologist, I will focus primarily on two autobiographical works -- autobiography as expression of the self should provide interesting insights into the working of their minds. As I said earlier, I will also attempt to indicate to which extent this Dionysian truth is part of a fully integrated personality, and it seems to me that autobiography as genre would be most suitable for this inquiry into the mind.[32]

Autobiography, the exotic and the Dionysian

In this section, then, I will deal with the dynamic relation that exists between the Dionysian and the exotic. Autobiography as an investigation into the self is often related to the exotic, if only for the fact that a deeper insight into the self is said to be a positive side-effect of a foreign cultural experience. True self-knowledge is acquired only then when the self experiences the strangeness of precisely that which is different from the self.

I would like to propose something else here, which as a counterstatement to this argument is much closer to the Nietzschean paradigm of being able to experience only that which is already somehow familiar. The quest of the truly exotic is in fact a quest of the self, not as a happy side-effect of an encounter with the unkown, but as a quest of the self exactly where the exotic is thought to exist. The truly exotic is thus defined in terms of a projection of the self, and, even more provocatively perhaps, as something which in itself does not exist. In fact, I will consider what is defined as the exotic as the projection of that part of the self which is a stranger to the self. The exotic is defined as the stranger, once again, yet now this definition is couched in terms of a projection of that which remains strange to the self in the self itself, rather than just the projection of the self onto a different cultural experience; or, as exoticism has conventionally been defined, as the strangeness of the cultural experience proper. The depiction of the exotic is thus a depiction of the self, or, to be more precise, of that strange part of the self which must somehow remain at a distance. Autobiography, then, can be defined as the discursive attempt at identifying the stranger in the self.

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[32] I feel justified in approaching the authors from the perspective of a psychologist for the very reason that they themselves were known for their ability to gauge the darker sides of the human psyche. Klaus Mann in his *André Gide und die Krise des modernen Denkens*, speaks of Gide's interest for seemingly trivial matters: „Das zweite Funkeln in [Gide's] Blick ereignete sich, kurz ehe wir das Lokal verließen. Ein kleiner Junge kam mit Blumen an unseren Tisch; es war recht kümmerliches Zeug, was er uns da in seinem Körbchen bot. Kümmerlich war auch der Verkäufer --ein spindeldürres Bürschchen, vielleicht zehn oder elf Jahre alt, mit weiten und blanken Augen im gelblich-welken Gesicht. Gide gab ihm etwas Geld, lehnte aber die verdorrten Rosen ab --ein Verhalten, das den Kleinen offenbar verwunderte oder sogar verletzte. (...) Der Junge hatte sich kaum zurückgezogen, als Gide mir schon animiert zuflüsterte: „Haben Sie bemerkt, wie er mich angeschaut hat -ganz böse, von der Seite? Faszinierend --finden Sie nicht? Dieser wilde, raubtierhafte Haß in seinen Augen! Der Junge war tief gekränkt. Natürlich hat er die Blumen irgendwo gestohlen, und auch Geld würde er stehlen, wenn die Gelegenheit sich ergibt. Aber Almosen --nein! Eine freundliche, selbstlose Geste wirft sein ganzes Weltbild über den Haufen und

In the following, I will argue that the depiction of the exotic in combination with autobiography reveals this Dionysian desire to be a part of the self which must remain strange to the self. This may seem a rather abstract argument or approach, yet many are those who have dealt with the darker sides of the human psyche. In our previous analysis, we have seen that Sloterdijk defines the Dionysian in terms of a "dialectical and symmetrical Other to the [Apollonian Unified Subject]." Sloterdijk describes Dionysus in terms of an *Autrui*[33], that is, this particular entity which constitutes the irrational side of human beings as opposed to their rational selves. Dionysus as Other never comes into play as itself,

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beleidigt ihn auch noch in seinem Ehrgefühl. C'est bien curieux, ça! C'est tout à fait remarquable..." (30-1).

but as something that is always already altered through the powers of Apollonian representation. Yet, Sloterdijk speaks of a "dialectical and symmetrical Other," thus suggesting that the Dionysian as irrational force somehow complies to the Apollonian rule of integration within a larger rational configuration. The dialectics and symmetry that Sloterdijk introduces in the struggle between the two powers evoke the harmonious state of a fully integrated subject.

In this analysis, however, I will speak of two authors for whom full integration of the hidden world of desire within the rational world of the spirit is far from obvious. Both Gide and Burroughs can be said to have actively engaged in a dialogue with the more incommensurable sides of the psyche. If Apollo prevents human beings from the neurosis inflicted by exposure to the Dionysian truth, then these authors, in a sense, have willed their own neurosis. Both authors are directly concerned with the realm of the Dionysian, as something that resists integration, if only because of their deviant sexual preferences. Their homosexuality, or, to be more precise, their interest in adolescent men (Burroughs rather provocatively speaks of "boys" from fourteen to twenty-five *(A Report from the Bunker* [62]), makes them sharply aware of the intricacies of human sexuality. Both attempt to escape the dogmas of their time, and both consider themselves outcasts in a society which normalized and generally domesticated (and in fact allowed for the sublimation of) only one type of sexuality.[34]

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[33] Sloterdijk uses a notion that, in my opinion, he borrows from Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical theory. For Lacan, desire is always already the desire of *Autrui*.

[34] The choice of a comparison between Gide and Burroughs may not be an obvious one, yet I would argue that their interest in this Dionysian sub-text is precisely what links these authors. Burroughs claims to have read Gide.

Critics have referred to their interest in a Dionysian experience. Foster, as indicated, speaks of Gide as another heir to Dionysus, whom Foster (in fact modernism in general) at some point defines as "the dark or alien god of instinctual excess" (173). Foster speaks of Gide's fascination with Nietzsche's Dionysus as, to be sure, "a guide to a better culture," yet also as an extremely "savage god" (146), that is, a power more alien than compatible to human beings and to life. Of the life-oriented protagonist in Gide's novel *L'Immoraliste*, Foster states that „[t]he Dionysian overwhelms the last recesses of [his] inner being" (173). Significantly enough, Foster speaks of feelings of "strange uneasiness" which the text inspires in the reader. In the second part of this chapter, I will attempt to relate this particular kind of uneasiness to my understanding of the Dionysian in one of Gide's texts.

Eric Mottram, in his *The Algebra of Need*, describes the extreme otherworldliness of the self in Burroughs' writing, and relates at least one work explicitly to his exploration of the liberated Dionysian or, in Burroughs' own words, the carnivalesque. Burroughs describes his fictional world as a carnival and circus world, and his characters as "carni-characters and con-world short change artists" (27). About Burroughs' *The Wild Boys*, which is a book he wrote in 1967 and 1969 in Tangier and London and which carries the subtitle "A Book of the Dead," Mottram states that it is "a work enabling the transition to another world than this, a guide to pass through to conflict-free eternity" (163). Mottram speaks of its content in terms of a "Dionysian army of freed young men (...) [who] actively engage in purely erotic goat-god games" (163). Though more extreme than Gide, Burroughs' writing is borderline writing in that it attempts to capture the limits of human experience. Mottram states that in *Junkie*, a text he started writing in Mexico City around 1950, the "focal image which bec[ame] increasingly central in Burroughs' work [was] the orgasm of the hanged man, the ultimate sacrificial victim and parasitic dummy, and the junkie emerging from addiction" (29). Burroughs' interest in narcotic experimentation and his own addiction are factors that testify to Burroughs' flirtation with the borderlines of human experience. Withdrawal and overdose are equal as far as the intensity of their effect on the human psyche is concerned, and, as such, approach the identity-disintegrating effects of orgasmic experience or Dionysian *Rausch*. Pain is ultimately nothing but intensified pleasure.

Yet, although both Gide and Burroughs may be concerned with identifying, exploring or even succumbing to the darker realms of the psyche, it should be noted that the identification of that which remains somehow strange to human beings is highly problematic. Further, when identification occurs, domestication usually follows. Foster speaks in this respect of Nietzsche's own "distrust for the unalloyed Dionysian," and of his acknowledgement that the Dionysian may be unleashed, yet should be domesticated at the same time. For all the credit that he gives to Nietzsche, Gide, himself, remains tentative in adopting Nietzsche's views on the Dionysian, not so much perhaps because he would disagree as because of a tacit uneasiness with this Dionysian truth. More than once, Gide has demonstrated a certain reticence with Nietzsche, and in one of his more significant quotes on the subject, he compares Nietzsche to a menacing shadow hovering over the road he was sure to have embarked on by himself (*Gide et la pensee allemande* (87)). For Gide, something in Nietzsche apparently remains difficult to assimilate.

Thus the Dionysian is something which will elude clear understanding, if only because of the human tendency to render harmless the more alien and threatening aspects of this truth. Dionysus as impulse, movement, reflex, pain, pleasure, twitch, thrust or desire defies rationalisation. The Dionysian is not the all too easily and intellectually avowed affirmation of life and impulses, something one might observe in both Gide and Burroughs. The Dionysian is a force that operates in a more subtle way --it reveals itself in descriptions, oppositions, images, that is, at places in the text where nothing appears to be really said. Once again, Dionysus animates the text, yet the animator appears as a masked entity.

With Gide and Burroughs, Dionysian desire finds expression through the apparent simplicity of the master-pupil relationship, a theme which is so prevalent in both their writings. Yet, the relationship is one between unequals, if only for the fact that the mentor's world of experience is so much wider than that of his pupil's. In fact, the relationship between master and pupil depends in its dynamics on the difference in power and knowledge that exists between the two parties. The Dionysian as cruel desire is precisely this gaze that watches the power dynamics between two parties of an unequal status evolve.

As I mentioned earlier, though human, the gaze is not innocent; in fact it is cruel. In its pure form, it is the primeval sadistic that anticipates that what is innocent will be blemished by a superior force. Ultimately, though, the dynamics of the relationship between the two parties are not always perceived in terms of these extreme oppositions. The gaze watches the spectacle of predator and prey in an age-old game of cruel submission. The gaze is accompanied by this quaint feeling of excitement and fear (a rush?) experienced in seeing innocence forged by compassionate knowledge. The gaze describes sheer intelligence aware of its power to mould and to manipulate. It is the attraction and shudder one may feel in seeing the magnetic appeal of the vampire, with the slow yet eager surrender of its victim. It is love, but love in terms of possession. It is the thrill of depending not just on anybody, but on the stranger (the gaze identifies the stranger as powerful and destructive). The gaze is the pleasure of playing with power; it is a play with the dynamics of power. The gaze is Foster's "strange feeling of uneasiness" -- Michel in Gide's *L'Immoraliste* echoes the remnants of the reader's own hidden desires.

Yet, once again, the Dionysian gaze is not explicit, precisely because it is so strange: it reveals itself through descriptions, oppositions and the exotic. The description of the adolescent native boys, in both Gide and Burroughs, has little to do with objective reality --it is the manifestation of Dionysian desire. Descriptions of geographical and cultural specificity are filtered through the Dionysian lens of desire. Yet, it is a specific type of desire. The text is a projection of the stranger in the self. Let us consider the following quote from Burroughs' *Literary Autobiography* (1973):

> As a young child, I wanted to be a writer because writers were rich and famous. They lounged around Singapore and Rangoon smoking Opium in a yellow pongee silk suit. They sniffed Cocaine in Mayfair and they penetrated forbidden swamps with a faithful native boy and lived in the native quarter of Tangier smoking Hashish and languidly caressing a pet gazelle (Mottram 16).[35]

Mottram may speak here of Burroughs' "fascinating interaction of writing and youthful experience" (16), yet I think that this quotation goes further than that: it provides us with interesting clues on the intricate relationship between the exotic and the Dionysian. The main preoccupation of the writer for Burroughs does not seem to be writing but the smoking of opium or hashish and the sniffing of cocaine. The cities of Singapore and Rangoon lend themselves to a quasi-permanent state of rapture. The yellow-coloured decay, as expressed in the "pongee silk suit," and the languidly applied caress or touch, inaugurate the seeping destruction of the "pet gazelle" native boy's beauty. The "languid" quality of the "caress" expresses the destructive powers of a disease ("languor" expresses the drowsiness of a sickly fatigue). "Penetrat[ion]" is caress; caress is decay. Burroughs, in this particular quote, beyond the description of the writer's occupation, strikes the note of Dionysian nature.

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[35] Gide's following quotation in *Si le Grain ne Meurt* echoes Burroughs' sensual experience of the exotic: Gide tells us: „L'Afrique! Je répétais ce mot mystérieux; je le gonflais de terreurs, d'attirantes horreurs, d'attente, et mes regards plongeaient éperdument dans la nuit chaude vers une promesse oppressante et toute enveloppée d'éclairs" (554).

The gaze of desire in *Queer* and in *Si le Grain ne Meurt*

In the final part of this analysis, I will analyze two examples of how the Dionysian exotic operates on a textual level in both Gide and Burroughs. The quotations are taken from Gide's *Si le Grain ne Meurt* and Burroughs' *Queer*. Both texts contain large chunks of autobiographical material. Though limited to remain within the confines of this short analysis, I will attempt to demonstrate that, though Gide and Burroughs belong to different literary traditions and periods, they share this underlying discourse in common. A strong preoccupation with the origins and intricacies of sexual desire unifies these authors beyond any cultural or literary periodization. As well, I will attempt to demonstrate that, with both Gide and Burroughs, what I have defined as the Dionysian goes beyond the mere surface of the text, even if both authors are engaged in an attempt at ruthless self-scrutiny. Their gaze and desire are equally cruel, as all human gaze and desire are, yet neither of the two is ultimately able to entirely escape the repression of this truth.

In *Queer*, Dionysian desire finds its way through the set of oppositions that the author creates. In his introduction, Burroughs sets off with the depiction of the exotic Mexican and culturally hybrid adolescent man, which, as an image, is so central to his novel.

> Outside, the neighbourhood now seemed enchanted: (...) Kiosks selling fried grasshoppers and peppermint candy black with flies. Boys in from the country in spotless white linen and rope

> sandals, with faces of burnished copper and fierce innocent black eyes, like exotic animals, of a dazzling sexless beauty. Here is a boy with sharp features and black skin, smelling of vanilla, a gardenia behind his ear (*Preface*, x).

Burroughs' "boys" are described as exotic candy --as innocence waiting to be initiated. Yet, the innocence already contains the grains of corruption. Burroughs creates an apparent opposition: the candy-like boys only partially contrast with the filth of the decaying city. Burroughs' description of Mexico City reflects this strange dynamics between purity and degradation. Beyond the textual surface moves the cruel image of innocence destroyed.

> When I lived in Mexico City at the end of the 1940s, it was a city of one million people, with clear sparkling air and the sky that special shade of blue that goes so well with circling vultures, blood and sand --the raw menacing pitiless Mexican blue. I liked Mexico City from the first day of my first visit there. In 1949, it was a cheap place to live, with a large foreign colony, fabulous whorehouses and restaurants, cockfights and bullfights, and every conceivable diversion (v).

Burroughs' "special shade of blue" must be Paglia's "suck of the swamp," the chthonic forces that animate life. Blue is both life and death. Burroughs speaks of the "seeping silence peculiar to Mexico, a vibrating, soundless hum." The description of Allerton, the protagonist's lover, is indicative of this process of slumbering decay:

> Allerton [the protagonist's lover] was tall and very thin, with high cheekbones, a small, bright-red mouth, and amber-coloured eyes that took on a faint violet flush when he was drunk. His gold-brown hair was differentially bleached by the sun like a sloppy dyeing job. He had straight, black eyebrows and black eyelashes. An equivocal face, very young, clean-cut and boyish, at the same time conveying an impression of make-up, delicate and exotic and Oriental. Allerton was never completely neat or clean, but you did not think of him as being dirty. He was simply careless and lazy to the point of appearing, at times, only half awake (16).

Burroughs clearly describes here the pet gazelle touched by the sensual caress of decay and death. Allerton's delicacy and sexual languor is both contrasted with and complemented by Lee's predatory energy:

> Lee watched the thin hands, the beautiful violet eyes, the flush of excitement on the boy's face. An imaginary hand projected with such force it seemed Allerton must feel the touch of ectoplasmic fingers caressing his ear, phantom thumbs smoothing his eyebrows, pushing the hair back from his face. Now Lee's hands were running down over the ribs, the stomach. Lee felt the aching pain of desire in his lungs. His mouth was a little open, showing his teeth in the half-snarl of a baffled animal. He licked his lips (25).

In the second part of Gide's *Si le Grain ne Meurt* a similar set of oppositions is created. What Allerton is to Burroughs, Mohammed is to Gide. The description of this Algerian youth is strikingly similar to Burroughs' in that the adolescent's savage-like innocence and reserve is set against the background of decadence, lethargy and rather aggressive curiosity. Gide tells us about his first encounter:

> (...) je me laissais assoupir à demi par la torpeur étrange de ce lieu, lorsque, dans l'entre-bâillement de la porte, apparut un adolescent merveilleux. Il demeura quelque temps, le coude haut levé, appuyé contre le chambranle, se détachant sur un fond de nuit. Il semblait incertain s'il devait entrer, et déjà je craignais qu'il ne repartît, mais il sourit au signe que lui fit [Oscar] Wilde, et vint s'asseoir en face de nous sur un escabeau.. Il sortit de son gilet tunisien une flûte de roseau, dont il commença de jouer exquisement (590).

Yet, no less than with Burroughs' Allerton, the description of the youth contains this strange Dionysian mixture of delicacy, exoticism, purity and decay:

> Ses grands yeux noirs avaient ce regard langoureux que donne le hashisch; il était de teint olivâtre; j'admirais l'allongement de ses doigts sur la flûte, la sveltesse de son corps enfantin, la gracilité de ses jambes nues qui sortaient de la blanche culotte bouffante, l'une repliée sur le genou de l'autre (590).

Sexuality with Gide might be generally presented in a less dark light than with Burroughs, yet it should be acknowledged that ultimately the Dionysian subtext of desire is hardly less prevalent. Sickness and recovery in the autobiographical works *L'Immoraliste* and *Si le Grain ne Meurt* are usually explained in terms of liberation from repression, yet the contrast of physical and moral degradation with the savage purity of the Northern African adolescent is a forceful underlying narrative which has received considerably less attention.

Allerton's "[conveyed] impression of make-up" and Mohammed's "olive-coloured demeanor" are part of the same image of corrupted beauty. The author's "yellow pongee silk," the boy's "languid gaze" and animal grace, the passivity of drug-infused bodies, it all fuses in a picture of sensual contamination over which the authors have very little control. Mohammed and Wilde are part of the same image. In *L'Immoraliste*, Gide's protagonist Michel argues that in his admiration for the adolescent who stole his wife's scissors and scrupulously demonstrated his skills in doing so, his feelings for the boy had been those of "amusement" and "gaiety" (15). Yet, qualifications such as amusement and gaiety seem hardly sufficient in describing his feelings for the young thief. In *Si le Grain ne Meurt*, Gide assures us that he would have liked to "scream with horror" in seeing one of his friends, as he puts it himself, "feeding off" the body of small Mohammed like "a huge vampire" over his victim (595). Yet, it remains unclear whether the scream of horror is a reluctant acknowledgement of the intensity of his own feelings of desire, or whether it truly is an expression of disgust by someone for whom, as Gide puts it himself, the "most furtive contact is often sufficient" (596):

> Pour moi, qui ne comprends le plaisir que face à face, réciproque et sans violence, et que souvent, pareil à [Walt] Whitman, le plus furtif contact satisfait, j'étais horrifié tout à la fois par le jeu de Daniel, et de voir s'y prêter aussi complaisamment Mohammed (596).[36]

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[36] Gide's detailed description reads: „Puis, tandis que je restais assis près des verres à demi vidé, Daniel saisit Mohammed dans ses bras et le porta sur le lit qui occupait le fond de la pièce. Il le

Burroughs' alter ego, Lee, appeals to similar feelings of "tenderness" for Allerton, and these no doubt are equally genuine (117). Yet, brotherly tenderness and "pleasure (...) without violence" are only part of a truth which for the greater part has to remain hidden under the veil of self-exposure. Both *Queer* and *Si le Grain ne Meurt* have the pretension of presenting an objective view of the authors in question, yet it remains to be established to which extent the true face of the authors' desire is acknowledged and revealed. Gide's main anguish, as he puts it himself, comes from Mohammed's all too eager compliance with his friend's wishes, even though the game the two of them are playing is not necessarily friendly. Gide admits to being "horrified," yet true terror comes from recognition. In a moment of revelation, Gide may all too well have understood this Dionysian truth of tenderness and tearing, of protection and violation, of *Trost* and *Verstückelung*.

In this short analysis, I have attempted to demonstrate that both *Queer* and *Si le Grain ne Meurt* are texts that are ruled by a powerful discourse underneath the more obvious one of autobiographical self-exposure. I have called this discourse cruel: the human gaze is the gaze of desire, and desire is not innocent.

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coucha sur le dos, tout au bord du lit, en travers; et je ne vis bien-tôt plus que, de chaque côté de Daniel ahanant, deux fines jambes pendantes. Daniel n'avait même pas enlevé son manteau. Très grand, debout contre le lit, mal éclairé, vu de dos, le visage caché par les boucles de ses longs cheveux noirs, dans ce manteau qui lui tombait aux pieds, Daniel paraissait gigantesque, et penché

And yet desire, that is, in fact, the gaze of desire, is not something we can easily control. It imposes itself in our most banal actions, though the gaze as such may not always be recognisable. The cruelty of the gaze is domesticated, either through a process of self-delusion --however mild-- or through a more genuine process of sublimation. In this analysis, I have called this gaze of desire a Dionysian gaze. This gaze is based on Nietzsche's original definition, yet it goes beyond this. In fact, I have attempted to demonstrate that there is a Dionysian gaze in Nietzsche's text itself. For both Gide and Burroughs, I have related this Dionysian gaze to the exotic --exoticism as the means through which this particular type of desire expresses itself.

More generally, I have attempted to demonstrate that this particular conception of the Dionysian touches on something basically human. What it touches on, in fact, is so human that it resists a standard or prescribed definition. Nietzsche, once again, may have tried to delimit the notion, and thus also domesticate it. Yet the Dionysian, as either desire, gaze, irrational instinct, the maternal or the earth itself, seems to be something that refuses to be contained by a sharp definition.

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sur ce petit corps qu'il couvrait, on eût dit un immense vampire se repaître sur un cadavre. J'aurais crié d'horreur" (595).

CHAPTER FOUR

ANDRE GIDE AND HERMANN HESSE: THE TRACE, THE MENTOR AND THE PUPIL

(...) Ein Gymnasiast liebt und bewundert einen etwas ältern Kameraden, würde es nie wagen, ihn anzureden, sieht ihn schon, den Unerreichbaren, für immer entschwinden, da wendet der Bewunderte, der schon bald die Schule verläßt, dem Jüngern sein Gesicht zu, lächelt und nickt ihm zu ... -so etwa ist Ihr Gruß für mich. (...) (Hermann Hesse to André Gide).

Interpretation, appropriation, reception and reflection

A few questions on influence

This chapter introduces the second part of my thesis. So far, I have focused on Nietzsche's writing as a question in itself. I have argued that Nietzsche's body of work is a true problematic in that it enhances complexity rather than resolves. We have seen that the complexity of Nietzsche's writing extends from style to genre, from structure to concepts, from language to appearance, from degrees of intensity to philosophical trick playing. There is a plurality of attempts to understand it, yet understanding is inhibited by the complexity of Nietzsche's writing. The second part will deal more specifically with the different interpretations of his work. At stake will still be the complexity of Nietzsche's philosophy, yet of importance now is the question of how it has been received by the different critics and artists. An equally important question is why it has been thus received, that is, beyond reasons that are related to the philosophy itself.

Pushing the analogy between the prism and Nietzsche's writing a bit further, one might state that the complexity of the prism resides within the nature of the prism itself, no matter what kind of light is shed upon it. Yet, one might also argue that the different bundles that try to capture its essence do capture at least something, though this particular something may not be the essence as it is traditionally conceived. The beam catches one or two single facets only. If the prism's essence resides within exposure of the different facets by the plurality of beams and bundles, then the best one can obtain from Nietzsche's writing is the very plurality of the different interpretations themselves. The essence of his writing, then, resides in the very fact that it needs many different lights from different sources in order to be fully exposed.

In this second part of my thesis, I will concentrate on the reflections that go back to the source from which the interpretive beam is shining. Once again, any opinion on Nietzsche must reveal one's own ideological or methodological stance. Claiming the 'real' or the 'mature' Nietzsche to reside in certain parts of his writing is not just a simple observation, but often a forceful *establishing* of hierarchical difference. The observation often reflects a hidden truth claim behind the gaze of expertise, a hidden ideology behind the veil of objectivity.

Many critics have observed that Nietzsche, possibly more than any other thinker before him, has been exploited for personal reasons. Critics have used him to set themselves off against his philosophy (Heidegger), or to claim his alignment with theirs (Derrida). The arguments of both Heidegger and Derrida, for instance, entail the move towards a world beyond traditional metaphysics, yet for the first critic Nietzsche did not, and for the second Nietzsche did propose a philosophy that escapes the traditional ones. At stake is the novelty of Nietzsche's writing, yet the question of whether he did or did not propose anything radically new is largely determined by the parameters of their own philosophy. Heidegger's observation that Nietzsche's real thought resides in the notes that he did not publish has a false ring about it, once one accepts the premise that Nietzsche's unpublished literary legacy precisely contains a more ontology-oriented philosophy (an opinion, as we have seen, held by critics such as Magnus, Stewart and Mileur). And Derrida's claim in *Eperons* that the entirety of Nietzsche's philosophy may be nothing more than a signifier turned adrift and broken away from that which it designates, is no less appropriative if one understands that for Derrida meaning can never be fixed or decisively determined.[1]

An additional problem for this particular chapter is that Nietzsche's writing has been appropriated in different types of texts. Critics may explicitly speak about Nietzsche, quote from the plurality of his texts and propose some final personally-motivated reading. Writers, however, cannot do this. In fact, influence may be acknowledged, yet the creative artist often feels obliged to downplay the importance of the models he or she has been using. In the case of the artist, the act of appropriation is not a negative side-effect of understanding a text, but a conscious effort to go beyond what is offered by the mentor. Appropriation is the prerequisite of art, and most self-respecting artists, contrary to the critic, will emphasize the thinker's compliance to the parameters of his or her own artistic creation.

Establishing influence in literature (or intertextual connections), therefore, is a tricky affair, precisely because the act of appropriation is fully acclaimed by the artist. The word root "propre" in "appropriation" is the self that underlies artistic pretension. Empirical approaches such as the study of references and footnotes, which in some cases is a worthwhile activity, clearly bypass any understanding of the author's reworking of Nietzsche. If anything, fiction may subvert the very imperative by which the reference exists. Foster, in his previously mentioned study on Nietzschean influence, argues for the importance of considering the artistic creations in themselves, and not as weakened derivatives of a Nietzschean prerogative. If the critic's justification of his or her interpretation has to be found in Nietzsche, that of the artist must reside in his own work of art. Here, the accuracy of interpretation is less an issue in itself. The reworking of what the author has defined as constituting truly Nietzschean premises still reveals a methodological stance, yet the method has no further philosophical or ideological implications, as is the case with critical thinkers such as Heidegger and Derrida. After all, literature is literature, no matter which side of Nietzsche is taken to represent this philosopher in the most proper way. Foster's theoretical approach to the establishing of influence is based on the supremacy of the artistic creation. He states:

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[1] This, of course, strictly speaking is always the case. Someone else's views are seen through the prism of one's own. My stand, too, on either Nietzsche, Heidegger or Derrida is somehow determined by my own parameters. The question, however, is to which degree room for something specifically Nietzschean is being created or allowed for. Later on, we will see that Nietzsche, himself, speaks of 'slow reading' as a remedy against all too eager appropriations. (See chapter five).

> The term "appropriation" usefully pinpoints the main interpretive principle I shall be following (...). When writers drew on Nietzsche's literary legacy for major artistic projects, they made it into something characteristically their own. So thorough was their assimilation or incorporation of the legacy into the work that the process can fairly be called an appropriation; the heirs take over. As a result, the critic must do more than simply map the numerous aftershocks of Nietzsche's ideas over a literary landscape. He must respect the integrity of imaginative literature, must shift at some point from Nietzsche to works which exist as systems with intrinsic characteristics of their own. (...) For direct contact to be critically meaningful, it must affect some main feature in a literary work. In other words, the Nietzschean elements should not be scattered haphazardly, but must gather along some interpretive axis within the work like a basic formal pattern, an underlying thematic concern or assumption, a structural element, or an autonomous aspect of a larger whole. Only by setting out from one or several of these axes can the critic do justice to the intrinsic qualities of the artistic projects conceived by the writers, and also capture their profound and complex linkage with Nietzsche (148).

The difficulty of establishing Nietzsche's influence on writers, as Foster points out, is that influence exists in many degrees and forms. At which point is it appropriate to speak of true influence? Finding a parallel between something in Nietzsche's philosophy and a work of literature may indicate a certain familiarity with Nietzsche on the author's part, yet it does not necessarily reflect a deep involvement with his thought. In the previous quote, Foster speaks of influence in terms of "elements" that form in the author's work a "basic pattern," an "underlying thematic concern," a "structural element," or an "autonomous aspect of a larger whole." For Foster, influence is true influence only then when the author shows a consistent and deep commitment to a philosopher's thought. Foster's method is one that proceeds from Nietzsche to the authors, only to return back to Nietzsche. Nietzsche is thus deprived of his exemplary function: all that now exists are ideas that freely move from thinker to thinker, and that change according to the recipient that adopts and uses them. Foster states:

> (...) to establish appropriation, the critic would have to push the analysis of motifs or action further. Only if he kept finding new evidence of the writer's involvement with Nietzsche would he be sure that he was dealing with an energizing influence that had penetrated to the mainsprings of the work. (...) Rather than setting out from Nietzsche to analyze the work, he would begin by identifying some main feature in the work that was closely bound up with Nietzsche, and then move through it back to Nietzsche (149).

Foster's emphasis on the works rather than on whatever explicit acknowledgement on the author's part may be a necessary step in determining what at this point we still refer to as influence exerted by a thinker on a writer. As indicated, authors may disclaim being directly influenced, or being influenced at all, for the sole reason of protecting the integrity of their work. Explicit statements on Nietzsche may help the critic to determine the author's attitude, yet they do not necessarily, and in a conclusive way, determine the question of influence in a work of literature. Nor do they say anything definitive on the question of how influence has taken place. In this respect, it is interesting to see to which extent an author like André Gide disclaims, though at some times more vehemently than at others, being influenced by Nietzsche, and how the questioning of the concept of influence itself serves his own artistic purposes. Gide indicates that all thought and experience resides within the writer himself, and that a certain degree of influence, if at all, can only take place if what is communicated onto the writer finds its equivalent in the personal experience of the writer himself. Metaphorically one might state: one can only understand if one speaks the same language.

For Gide it is clear that his works are the expression of his innermost being, a realm of experiences that may coincide with those of a certain thinker, yet that cannot be determined or created or even predicted by an external stimulus in the form of a thinker and his books. Human beings can be moved or pushed into a certain direction by a certain philosophy or doctrine, yet what Gide seems to imply is that, if properly experienced, the philosophy can never remain unaffected. If literature is the passing on of a profoundly personal experience, then influence as the perfect compliance to and rendering of a philosopher's thought does not exist. In his autobiographical *Journal* from the years 1939-49, Gide states:

> (...) l'influence de Nietzsche sur mon oeuvre. C'est flatteur; mais à quoi peut inviter ce travail? A rechercher, dans mon *Immoraliste* par exemple, tout ce qui peut rappeler le Zarathoustra et à ne plus tenir compte de ce que m'enseigna la vie même. (...) Le livre était tout composé dans ma tête et j'avais commencé de l'écrire lorsque je fis la rencontre de Nietzsche, qui m'a d'abord gêné. Je trouvai chez lui, non point une incitation, mais bien un empêchement tout au contraire. Si Nietzsche ici me servit, ce fut, par la suite, en purgeant mon livre de toute une part de théorie qui n'eût pas manqué de l'alourdir. (...) J'ai beaucoup réfléchi à cette question des „influences" et crois que l'on commet à ce sujet de bien grossières erreurs. Ne vaut réellement, en littérature, que ce que nous enseigne la vie. Tout ce que l'on apprend que par les livres reste abstrait, lettre morte. N'eussé-je rencontré ni Dostoïevsky, ni Nietzsche, ni Blake, ni Browning, je ne puis croire que mon oeuvre eût été différente. Tout au plus m'ont-ils aidé à désembrouiller ma pensée. Et encore? J'eus plaisir à saluer ceux en qui je reconnaissais ma pensée. Mais cette pensée était mienne, et ce n'est pas à eux que je la dois. (...) (858-9)

Gide's refusal here to acknowledge Nietzschean influence, with which to a certain extent we can agree, reflects the artist's concern with originality: "(...) [the] thought [in my work] is mine, and it is not to [Dostoïevsky, Nietzsche, Blake or Browning] that I owe it." Gide presupposes life and experience as the prerequisites of artistic creation, and for Gide these truths are always personal. Writing is the rendering of personal experience and events, and a philosopher's abstract thought has no bearing on this: "all that one learns from books remains abstract, dead material."

The difficulty with this argument, however, is that it is not exactly clear what experience is. Gide considers his personally-lived experience as an entity in itself, as something which is unique because it springs, as he puts it himself, from the innermost being of the self. The fact is, however, that experience is no stable entity that precedes influence, something that is original just because it is personal. Experience may be an experience only when one recognizes it as such. Influence may very well precede experience for the latter to be perceived as such. Or in other words: one may have to have read, or have been told in some way or other, about an experience prior to its acknowledgement as such. This argument may seem a rhetorical game of words. Yet the stakes are important: Dostoyevsky's 'Underground Man' is precisely tortured by this inability to be original, by his feeling that whatever he experiences has been laid out in some petrified formula before. The doubtful pleasure he obtains from throwing a five rouble note into the lap of his newly acquired girl friend (as if she were a prostitute), is even more so diminished by his impression that both he and she are duplicating a formulaic situation. The underground man's frustration stems from the conviction that he can never be original, and that his behaviour seems to him never able to escape the strict parameters of a jaded cliché.

It may be pointless to have the one entity precede the other. Experience from within and influence from without seem equally important in a human being's spiritual development, and it is simply very difficult to say which comes first. Even if influence precedes anything that takes place on an internal experiential level, it still seems likely that influence is turned into something that is truly one's own. If true originality is a myth, then an exact duplication or taking in of somebody else's thought is a no less fallacious observation.

Yet, claiming to do without influence, or assuming that influence can be effectively channelled, is no less self-deluding. Gide may claim to have not been influenced by Nietzsche, yet the very act of understanding someone's thought is reason enough to fear a certain influence. Understanding and empathy on the interpreter's part are sure signs of being subjected to at least a certain degree of influence. It is a fact that human beings can control their minds only with difficulty, and the traces that remain from somebody else's attempt at persuasion within the sub- or unconscious mind, even if consciously disclaimed, are difficult to trace back. Influence is like a liquid that seeps into the listener's mind. Borges' stories on the intricate working of the human mind are disconcerting, precisely because in them the mind has a life of its own. The young protagonist in "Funes the Memorious" is all the more disquieting because the boy cannot stop his mind from registering the chaotic influx of external stimuli. The fact is that we cannot help our minds from understanding, even if we may not wish to do so.

These few tentative remarks on the intricate questions of influence and interpretation are meant to guide us in the analysis that follows. In it, I will speak of a certain Nietzschean influence (although I will primarily speak in terms of a Nietzschean trace) in one work by André Gide and one by Hermann Hesse. Though the first may generally deny, and the second claim influence from this philosopher, I will generally disregard these writers' explicit statements on the question of influence. That is, I will not hold these observations as final statements or answers in the controversy over influence. As Foster, I will be looking then at similarities between Nietzsche and these authors in their works, though, as Foster also indicates, the similarities should be structural for influence to be really defined in terms of an ongoing involvement with Nietzsche. Once again, the previous discussion is not meant to establish a rigorous or even hierarchical distinction between the one who exercises and the one who receives influence.

The irony here, in my opinion, is that the stronger the loyalty to the philosopher and his thought, the more the philosophy is likely to be affected. And, as we will see, for both Gide and Hesse the intensity with which Nietzsche was originally received is very strong. In this respect, it is interesting to note that Foster carefully speaks of Gide, for instance, as an "heir to Dionysus" instead of the more direct "heir to Nietzsche." The previous chapter has shown that Dionysus as a concept circulated prior to the emergence of Nietzsche's specific definition, and that interpreters after him have freely adopted it according to their own personal needs. We have established that the intimate and personal nature of the concept, that is, as something which is inherent in all human beings, also allows for a very personal type of interpretation. The prerogative of what Dionysus entails is not reserved to Nietzsche alone, but inevitably so to whomever experiences it on a very personal level.

I will focus on two works that can be attributed to the 'mature' Gide and to the 'mature' Hesse. Although generally one should avoid qualifications such as 'mature,' I have chosen two works that emerge at a later point in their literary careers: *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* and *Narziß und Goldmund* respectively. Both works date from the late 1920s and both can be said to contain the wide scale of the authors' literary preoccupations. And both works, if Nietzschean influences here can be said to have played an important role, must contain a more balanced or at least more personal approach to Nietzsche, if only because of the time-frame that separates the works from the point of first contact.[2]

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[2] Joseph Mileck situates Hesse's first exposure to Nietzsche in the year 1895: "Schon im Frühjahr 1895 (...) fing Hesse an, Nietzsche zu lesen. Der Dichter-Philosoph reizte ihn sofort und hat nie aufgehört, ihn zu fesseln. Die anfängliche Faszination verstärkte sich (...) und nahm dann allmählich ab. (...) Hesses begeisterte Zustimmung zu Nietzsche dem Dichter wechselte mit hochmütiger Verachtung für Nietzsche den Philosophen. Die Philosophie des Werkes *Also Sprach Zarathustra* war für Hesse ebenso überholt wie er die künstlerische Beherrschung des Wortes einzigartig fand. Nietzsches ästhetische Einstellung zum Leben

I will try to approach explicit statements on Nietzsche from the perspective of a psychologist. Rather than locating the importance of the quote in what it says, it might be more useful, and definitely more interesting, to focus on that which it does not say. When Gide, in one of his quotes, speaks of Nietzsche in terms of a shadow that hovers over the road he was sure to have embarked on by himself, he does so to disclaim any direct influence from Nietzsche prior to his own creative conception of his literary material. Whether this statement is actually true or not, or whether Gide can be held as the most perfect judge of his own literary creations, is not the issue here. What is more interesting, in my opinion, are the very words Gide uses to describe Nietzsche: he compares Nietzsche to a shadow, yet the shadow may very well be a shadow of himself.

Gide's choice of the word shadow, on a deeper level, rather than whatever disavowal of Nietzsche's importance to his oeuvre, indicates a tacit uneasiness with Nietzsche and his philosophy. At this point, I would hold that with Gide there is a certain reticence with Nietzsche's thought, not because of a certain incongruity of tone or sensibility, but precisely because the thinkers are so alike. It seems unmistakable that Gide has recognized himself in certain parts of Nietzsche's thinking, and that this very recognition explains the feelings of uneasiness that Gide claims to have experienced when reading Nietzsche.

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sprach Hesse ungemein stark an, doch die "Herrenmoral" lehnte er völlig ab. Und mit der zunehmenden Ernüchterung im Hinblick auf den Ästhetizismus (...) mit seinem wachsenden Wunsch nach mehr menschlichen Kontakten in Basel legte sich Hesses Leidenschaft für Nietzsche sehr bald. Die erste Begegnung an der Jahrhundertwende war hauptsächlich ein erregendes Erlebnis; erst in der *Demian*-Periode wurde Nietzsche zu einem formenden Faktor in Hesses Leben und zu einem mächtigen Anstoß in seiner Kunst" (29-30). J.B. Forster also speaks of the 1890s as the time of Gide's acquaintance with Nietzsche's work. He states: "In 1899, Gide could write that *Birth* epitomized Nietzsche's whole philosophy -"all of his future writings are there in germ" (In *Prétextes, suivi de Nouveaux prétextes*, 1903, 1911, 83) (...) [Gide] (...) publish[ed] a critical essay on Nietzsche in December 1899 (...). In this essay, there are (...) hints that

Gide, Hesse and Nietzsche: a similar mindset
fruits, subversion and trickery

On the surface there are many similarities between the works of Gide, Hesse and Nietzsche. If one considers Nietzsche's more fictional narrative, *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, fit to contend with any work of literature, one might, now equipped with the means to compare, establish a wide variety of very similar literary preoccupations between the respective authors.

All three are concerned with a higher type of human being: the *Übermensch* prominently figures in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, for instance, yet no less strikingly in the fictional worlds of both Gide and Hesse. Lafcadio in *Les Caves du Vatican*, Bernard in *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, Michel in *L'Immoraliste*, Goldmund in *Narziß und Goldmund*, and Demian and Siddhartha in the novels of that same title; each one of these protagonists reflects the authors' attempt at defining a new type of human being, a higher individual liberated from parental, religious and societal constraints. And each of these protagonists symbolises the authors' struggle with the feasibility of transposing a theoretical concept onto the stage of real life. Gide's *acte gratuit*, as a total renunciation of any constraints whatsoever, may be defined as the parodic exaggeration of this same preoccupation with new man. Lafcadio's act of freedom echoes Goldmund's rejection of paternalistic authority, which topos, in turn, echoes Zarathustra's incitations to live by one's own standards. Lafcadio, Bernard, Michel, Goldmund, Demian and Siddhartha are just a few of

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Gide's first direct encounter had been preceded by information from other sources: "I entered into Nietzsche the many protagonists conceived of by these authors who can be said to represent the liberated state of the Nietzschean child at play on the beach of life. These protagonists, in whichever form and degree, represent the final step in a process of what in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* figures as the transformation from camel to child.

Nietzsche's unconditional philosophy of pure this worldliness finds its resonance within the works of both Gide and Hesse, though the vigorous immanence proclaimed by Zarathustra is paralleled by a perhaps weaker and slightly more naive version in the case of Gide and Hesse. Gide's promulgation of sensual experience in an early work such as *Les Nourritures terrestres* matches Hesse's display of eroticism in a thematically similarly disposed novel such as *Narziß und Goldmund*. And both works, in turn, seem to match Zarathustra's searing words of wisdom on the supremacy of the body as opposed to the spirit: "[a]ber der Erwachte, der Wissende sagt: Leib bin ich ganz und gar, und nichts außerdem, und Seele ist nur ein Wort für ein Etwas am Leibe" (565). Nathanaël's "fruits" and Goldmund's "golden mouth" are symbols of the same ideology that wishes to do away with religion or otherwise motivated restraints imposed on the pleasures of sensual experience. Zarathustra's denunciation of the "despisers of the body" prefigure in Gide and Hesse a variety of characters which have become almost stock characters now, such as the authoritarian father that keeps down his rebellious son, the inhibited priest who is tempted by the sins of his own flock, the petty bourgeois, or the hypocrite thwarted by suppressed desires.

A questioned and requestioned sense of authenticity links these three authors together. Yet, their taste for religion also binds them: the dynamics of the *Zarathustra*

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in spite of myself, I was waiting for him before I knew him..." (*Prétextes*, 85)" (146, 150).

narrative, it has been stated before, is largely conditioned by the foil of the biblical one. Imagery, style and structure of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* lose much of their meaning and force when no longer positioned as a contrast to their biblical counterparts. The force of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is the subversive use of Judeo-Christian phraseology and imagery for the propagation of a philosophy which is its very opposite. And this subversive technique also applies to both Gide and Hesse. The teachings of Nathanaël's mentor in Gide's *Nourritures* echo those of Sinclair's spiritual brother in Hesse's *Demian*. And all of their teachings, both in style and content, are reminiscent of the gospel as taught by Jesus-Christ.

Theodore Ziolkowski, in his study on Hesse's novels, speaks of "the gospel of Demian" in relation to the novel, thus suggesting that there is a clear link between Hesse and religion. The biblical mark of Cain, which as a central theme prominently figures within the novel, is turned into a symbol of rebellious distinction rather than obedience to divine will. The mark comes to stand for an ideology which clearly surpasses conventional biblical interpretations, though the ideology itself still operates through the old religious formulas and symbols. Demian's death at the end of the novel, for instance, has the quality of a sacrifice, yet the philosophy is now one that celebrates strength rather than weakness: the disappearance of spiritual guidance envisions the disciple's independence from all guidance whatsoever. Demian's god is still just, yet the god is no longer the just God of the Christian faith, but a god by the name of Abraxis, an historical Gnostic deity symbolizing the "realm beyond good and evil" (110).

And Frau Eva, Demian's mother, though clearly referring to the biblical Eve, is deified in her new role as the eternal mother of mothers, and, on a more personal level, she functions as the protagonist's spiritual guide toward a philosophy of total self-acceptance. Gnosticism, paganism, Buddhism, biblical wisdom, Jungian psychology and Nietzschean philosophy are all present; a large number of world-views converge in what has now become a rather eclectic and personal vision of traditional religion. Ziolkowski, in this respect, speaks of Hesse's "irony" and "secularization" of religious themes:

> An essentially Nietzschean doctrine is promulgated in a novel whose structure, language, images, and impulses are basically religious; and the central mouthpiece of these doctrines is a figure [Demian] whose characteristics are based typologically upon those of Christ. Now this identification of Nietzsche and Christ is not far-fetched, at least in Hesse's mind, for the note is sounded within the novel itself. When Demian reminds Sinclair, toward the end, that they must remain true to themselves, he says: „What nature has in mind for mankind is written in the individual, in you and in me. It was in Jesus, it was in Nietzsche." Any mention of Jesus in this way, needless to say, presupposes a secularization of his character (141).

Gide's biblical inspiration for an ideology which can be said to be based upon a radically different approach to conventional religion is no less strong. Gide's "fruits," though reminiscent of the forbidden fruit of the Book of Genesis, are intended to be picked and enjoyed by the thirsty youth. Klaus Mann, in his biography of Gide, writes: "*Les Nourritures terrestres* ist das Hohelied aller Arten von Durst. Die Wollust des Durstes wird hier noch mehr gepriesen als die Wollust des Trinkens oder als die Früchte, die uns durststillenden Saft gewähren. Unermüdlich forscht der liebestrunkene, dursttrunkene Wanderer nach immer neuen Tränken, von deren unerhörten Aromas er sich immer neue Nuancen des Durstes erhofft" (82). Gide's conception of thirst still refers to the biblical definition of thirst as the craving for divine knowledge and spiritual quietude, yet with Gide thirst is no longer there to be quenched, but has become a means in itself - thirst *is* knowledge, and thirst *is* enjoyment. Thirst is now defined in terms of a sensuous experience of a physical lack, and instead of the feeling to be neutralized, the experience, for the very life-enhancing quality that it brings, should be prolonged.

No less subversive is Gide's style in *Les Nourritures*. The biblical language of instruction and wisdom is undermined in that, at the end, the message, rather than restating itself, cancels itself out. Gide-Ménalque, in a gesture of self-sacrificing rigour, advises his pupil to "throw away his book" and to disregard any truth which is not genuinely his own:

> Nathanaël, jette mon livre; ne t'y satisfais point. Ne crois pas que *ta* vérité puisse être trouvée par quelque autre; plus que de tout aie honte de cela. Si je cherchais tes aliments, tu n'aurais pas de faim pour les manger; si je te préparais ton lit, tu n'aurais pas sommeil pour y dormir (248).[3]

The subversive play with conventions and traditions, both literary and otherwise, is a characteristic trait that unifies the three thinkers. The message that winds up denying itself as message is reminiscent of Zarathustra's appeal to a rigorous sense of independence with the followers of his doctrine. Nietzsche's motto in *Zarathustra* is both enigmatic and intriguing: "[e]in Buch für Alle und Keinen." The subtitle suggests a playful Nietzsche, intent on tricking his readers: it is as if his philosophy is so intricately construed that meaning must remain concealed, and that the average reader must satisfy him- or herself with a rather superficial understanding of the text. It is as if its message is highly personal and can only pertain, ultimately, to the one who conveys the message. The individual's strength lies within his or her own individual philosophy, which in Zarathustra's view is a collection of useful myths, rather than a universal philosophy that applies to each and everyone. Much in the same vein, Oskar Seidlin speaks of the "bewildering spectacle of confession and hiding" in relation to Hesse's work:

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[3] *Les Nourritures terrestres.*

> Is it not revealing that one of [Hesse's] very first works presented itself to the audience as *The Posthumous Writings and Poems of Hermann Lauscher*, edited by Hermann Hesse; that his latest one is entitled *The Glass Bead Game, the Attempt of a Life Chronicle of Magister Ludi Joseph Knecht*, edited by Hermann Hesse; that his *Demian* appeared anonymously with the subtitle *The Story of Emil Sinclair's Youth*; that *Steppenwolf* (1927) pretends to be the autobiography of a certain Harry Haller, found in his room after he has mysteriously left the town where he lived for a few months? There is a permanent hiding behind pseudonyms, behind a mere editorship --in short: a recalcitrance to „admit" which is ironically counteracted by the urge to expose himself, to „confess" (11).[4]

These thinkers can be said to play in their works a game of hide and seek. While Nietzsche chooses a fictional character to render what he himself has termed his most profound thought, Hesse, in his turn, launches his first philosophically predicated novel, *Demian*, under a fictitious name. And Gide may be called the master of the game of illusion. *Les Caves du Vatican* is a parody of formulas: the religious conversion of the atheist, the exaggerated sense of freedom of the independent youth turned adrift, the feelings of paranoia of the petty bourgeois justified, all images fuse into a message the tone of which has become rather ambiguous. In Gide's experimental novel, *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, the play is one of self-reflexivity and self-irony: the central character of the book is a writer who is precisely concerned with the writing of his own book. The narrative develops on different levels and into different directions, with each character in part of the story unfolding his or her own sub-narrative. Mann, who especially considers the *Caves* to be a prime example of the author's playful sense of humour, argues:

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[4] Oskar Seidlin: „Hermann Hesse: The Exorcism of the Demon. In: *Hermann Hesse: a collection of criticism edited by Judith Liebmann.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1977.

> André Gides *grand écart*, seine Bravourleistung und sein gewagtester Akt, ist bekannt unter dem Namen „*Les Caves du Vatican*" (...). Der Koboldhafte Geist (...) bricht plötzlich aus, triumphiert über alle Hemmungen ästhetischer, moralischer Natur, beansprucht die Szene ganz für sich allein. Aus dem gedämpften Kichern ist ein Gelächter geworden -- unbändig, elementar. „*Die Verliese des Vatikans*" --ein inspirierter Ulk von wahrhaft verblüffender Frechheit-- gehört in der Tat zu den Meisterwerken der humoristischen Weltliteratur; in seiner Art ist das Buch ganz entschieden ein Gipfel, ein Äußerstes von ikonoklastischem Witz, eine tour de force von unvergleichlicher Verve und Frische (129).

And thus, it is possible to observe a set of very similar preoccupations with these three thinkers. If one accepts the proposition that Nietzsche is one of the precursors of literary modernism, then one can state that the three motifs we have now --only schematically-- established are reflective of a modernist mind-set. The pick of the earthly fruit, the subversion of established authority and morality and the playful display of, for instance, self-reflexivity are some of the main characteristics of literary modernism.

There are definitely more common characteristics to be established. All three thinkers can be said to experiment with form: if Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is an exploration of the very form in which a new type of philosophy should be presented, Gide openly challenges the parameters of the traditional nineteenth century novel in his dynamically conceived *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* (which in fact he calls the first novel ever). And Hesse, too, can be said to experiment with structure: *Der Steppenwolf*, as one of Hesse's most striking literary break-throughs, is a novel in which the boundaries between reality and fiction are challenged, not so much as a topic in the narrative, but as a way along which the novel itself should be interpreted. The reader him- or herself is implicated in the game. And Gide, in particular, shares with Nietzsche a strong interest in science, and in its application to human beings. Gide's *Corydon*, this apology of homosexuality as a natural phenomenon, is a wide display of the scientific and biological theories of both Nietzsche's and Gide's time.[5]

The difficulty of establishing influence: influence and metaphysical anchoring

I have introduced the previous short section by referring to a set of similar preoccupations between Gide, Hesse and Nietzsche, rather than speaking of direct influence exerted by the one upon the other. It is clear that themes such as the unconditional affirmation of life, the subversion of biblical style and imagery and the tendency to conceal one's own intentions play an important role in the works of these thinkers. And it is likely that Nietzsche in some way or other provided both Gide and Hesse with an incentive to explore that which he himself had somehow initiated, or that by which he had been inspired himself.

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[5] André Gide: *Corydon*. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1925. References abound in this essay, from those to

Yet, as indicated in the introduction, a certain reservation seems appropriate. Neither the typically Gidean nor the typically Hessean hero are perfect adaptations of Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch*: all one can ultimately say is that they are explorations of an idea that may stem from Nietzsche, yet an idea that even with Nietzsche largely remains tentative (in Zarathustra the *Übermensch* is a strongly poetic figure). Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* may focus on two central themes, the *Übermensch* and eternal recurrence, and both Gide and Hesse have explicitly stated to have been familiar with the work. Yet, it is indicative that throughout the narrative Zarathustra claims to be looking for the *Übermensch* himself: neither he nor anyone else, at the point at which he is still searching, can be identified as a prime example of the very concept the realization of which he so explicitly argues to facilitate. Thus neither Demian or Goldmund in Hesse nor Bernard or Lafcadio in Gide, to name but a few of the many heroes, can be said to be perfect representations of the Nietzschean *Übermensch*, precisely because there is in Nietzsche no adequate definition of what the *Übermensch* entails, nor is there an answer to the question of how the theoretical concept should negotiate the practical limitations of its realization in everyday life. The wide scale of protagonists in both Gide and Hesse that in some way or other hark back to the Nietzschean style *Übermensch*, must be indicative of an exploration rather than downright duplication of this concept.

Ziolkowski, then, may speak of "an essentially Nietzschean doctrine" in relation to Hesse's *Demian* (1919), yet the difficulty which arises from this observation is that it is problematic to speak of something "essentially Nietzschean." If Nietzsche's philosophy, in the final analysis, boils down to a simply "being true to oneself," which is an opinion that

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scientists in biology and medicine to those in sociology and history.

may ultimately be upheld by both Ziolkowski and Hesse, then this statement is definitely a simplification of Nietzsche's thought.

To be sure, authenticity of the self, and everything that is somehow involved in this attitude towards life and the self, is an important part of Nietzsche's philosophy. Yet, the reductive statement about the self does not say anything about the degree in which authenticity of the self takes place in Nietzsche. His philosophy defined as such ignores the intensity with which Nietzsche's Zarathustra wishes immanence and loyalty of human beings to their earthly lives to take place. Zarathustra's sense of independence, it has been stated before, is rigorous and without compromise: Zarathustra's psychological movement of self-scrutiny is a constant subjecting of the self to the analytical gaze of authenticity. The lack of a clear resolution in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* may very well be the very impossibility, or at least difficulty, of human beings to lead a truly authentic life (and Zarathustra's growing realization thereof). Demian's sense of authenticity of the self, then, though professedly Nietzschean, may in reality be more characteristically Hessean.

In his analysis of Gide's *Nourritures*, Mann also speaks of an obvious Nietzschean influence. He argues:

> Es ist kaum von Wichtigkeit, ob Gide direkt unter Nietzsches Einfluß stand, als er seinen Panegyrikus der irdischen Lüste schrieb. Begnügen wir uns damit, festzustellen, daß „Les Nourritures terrestres“ erfüllt sind vom Geist und Rhytmus des deutschen Dichter-Philosophen. Zarathustra und der Gide jener Epoche sprechen dieselbe Sprache, haben die gleichen Töne und Gebären. Beide leugnen und verachten die asketischen Ideale; beide betonen den Primat des Biologischen über das Ethische; beide sind antichristlich, beide verkündigen die Umwertung aller Werte. Gides Verherrlichung dynamischer Energien, seine Vision der dionysischen Liebe --im Gegensatz zur christlichen Caritas--, sein ganzer Lebenskult, sogar die Kadenz seiner lyrisch gesteigerten Prosa mit ihrer Mischung aus

> priesterlichen und rebellischen Akzenten --all dies ist Nietzsche *tout pur*, unverkennbar, ohne jeden Zweifel (86).

For Mann, there is a similar "spirit" and "rhythm," a similar "language," "tone" and set of "gestures." Both resent the ascetic ideal and both preach the primacy of the biological. Mann concludes his list of similarities, which is much the same as ours, by stating that all these are "unconditionally Nietzsche, unmistakably so, and without a doubt" (86). Yet speaking of Gide in terms of "pure Nietzsche," even if the statement is moderated by referring to a certain period in Gide's career as a writer, is making the obvious assumption that influence can be that easily traced back to its source.[6]

It is significant to note that Mann does not reduce Gide's *Nourritures* to a Nietzschean treatise. Mann refers to other influences from other thinkers such as Bergson, Rimbaud, Whitman, and ultimately also Rousseau. Yet, the list of intellectual authorities to stand at the origin of the *Nourritures* demonstrates the difficulty of establishing what exactly influences a writer. And Mann's enumeration of similarly disposed authorities must inevitably relativize his previous argument on the primacy of a Nietzschean influence: it is ultimately very difficult to establish at which point a certain Nietzschean influence stops and where either Bergson's or Whitman's take over. In a final analysis, it is difficult to determine whether style, melody, tone or even content of the *Nourritures* are reminiscent of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* rather than of Whitman's "Song of Myself," or whether the reverse is the case. Mann states himself that Whitman's influence on Gide has been "hardly any less prevalent" than Nietzsche's.[7] A text contains many echoes, and it is impossible to establish with certainty the origin of a certain echo. The origin of a text does not lie within the influence of a certain thinker --this is merely a metaphysical grounding of the text in some other textual authority. The origin as such does not exist: origin is constantly diverted from the one host to the other, and at no place does it or can it exist independently and in its pure form. Mann himself argues:

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[6] Nietzsche speaks of the inevitability (or is it near-inevitability?) of the appropriative act: „Die Kraft des Geistes, Fremdes sich anzueignen, offenbart sich in einem starken Hange, das Neue dem Alten anzuähnlichen, das Mannigfaltige zu vereinfachen, das gänzlich Widersprechende zu übersehen oder wegzustossen: ebenso wie er bestimmte Züge und Linien am Fremden, an jedem Stück 'Aussenwelt' willkürlich stärker unterstreicht, heraushebt, sich zurecht fälscht. Seine Absicht geht dabei auf Einverleibung neuer 'Erfahrungen', auf Einreihung neuer Dinge unter alte Reihen, --auf Wachsthum also; bestimmter noch, auf das Gefühl des Wachsthums, auf das Gefühl der vermehrten Kraft" (*JGB*, 230). It should be noted, however, that Nietzsche is rather ambiguous on this point (in the same section, he opposes '[der] Erkennend[e]' to the one who negates difference and falsifies reality: „Diesem Willen zum Schein, zur Vereinfachung, zur Maske, zum Mantel, kurz zur Oberfläche (...) wirkt jener sublime Hang des Erkennenden entgegen, der die Dinge tief, vielfach, gründlich nimmt und nehmen will"). Yet, Nietzsche speaks in terms of the appropriative 'power' of the spirit that makes things assimilate („Kraft"), thus turning it into a not entirely negative quality. In another important section of *JGB*, he speaks of life as being 'essentially' appropriative („[Ausbeutung] gehört in's *Wesen* des Lebendigen (...)": „(...) Leben selbst ist *wesentlich* Aneignung, Verletzung, Überwältigung des Fremden und Schwächeren, Unterdrückung, Härte, Aufzwängerung eigner Formen, Einverleibung und mindestens, Ausbeutung, --aber wozu sollte man immer gerade solche Worte gebrauchen, denen von Alters her eine verleumderische Absicht eingeprägt ist?" (*JGB*, 259)

> [es] wäre falsch, zu glauben, daß Nietzsches Einfluß der einzige oder einzig wichtige sei, der sich im Gewebe der „Nourritures" feststellen ließe. Es finden sich da noch mancherlei andere Anklänge und Bezüge. Wollte man die geistigen Strömungen, die sich in diesem sentimentalischen Heidentum mischen, bis zur Quelle zurückverfolgen, man käme beim Rousseauschen „Retour à la nature" an --was freilich auch noch nicht ein völlig originaler Anfang ist (86).

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[7] Mann also indicates Whitman as an important thinker who influenced Gide, yet the difficulty of distinguishing Nietzsche's from Whitman's influence (or even Bergson's) in the *Nourritures* remains largely unresolved: „Die Macht, die der große Amerikaner über Gides Fühlen und Denken hatte, ist kaum weniger bedeutend als der Einfluß Nietzsches. Aber im Gegensatz zu der ambivalenten Faszination des Deutschen erscheint Whitmans Zuspruch kräftig und positiv, frei von aller Hysterie und Doppeldeutigkeit. Der Dichter der „Leaves of Grass" -mystisch entflammt, dabei aber kerngesund- ist der ideale Führer für einen empfänglichen und sensitiven, aber doch unabhängigen jungen Geist. Die „Nourritures" sind in der Tat ein verfeinertes, differenziertes Echo der gewaltigen Stimme, die über den Atlantik dröhnt" (87).

The ideological voices that make up the "sentimental paganism" of the *Nourritures* can ultimately not be traced back to a univocal, original source. Thoughts inevitably change whenever adopted by a new host, and the range of hosts of whichever thought is wide. Analyzing Gide, even the Gide of the *Nourritures*, through the lens of a Nietzschean affirmation of life, is an activity that must render deceptive truths: Nietzsche's (or Whitman's for that matter) philosophy of *Lebensbejahung* is not Gide's, not even the Gide of the *Nourritures*.[8]

Siddhartha, the protagonist of Hesse's eponymous novel, establishes at one point in the text that his son's behaviour is identical to the behaviour he had himself manifested towards his own father. The message is clear: life is a circle; what has happened before will recur again. The difficulty, however, is that by referring to Nietzsche's concept of eternal recurrence to explain what Hesse is trying to say in *Siddhartha* (1922) would be making the too quick assumption that Hesse's idea of eternal recurrence is identical to Nietzsche's. This also suggests that the thought of eternal recurrence originates in Nietzsche. The fact is, however, that eternal recurrence is also a Buddhist view of life, that both Hesse and Nietzsche have shown an interest in Buddhism over an extended period of time, and it is thus very difficult to determine whether Siddhartha's revelation of himself treading in his father's footsteps is based on Nietzsche rather than on Buddhism, or vice versa. Influence exists, yet it cannot be used as the final say in the identification of a thinker's or writer's thought.

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[8] Renée Lang in her well-documented study, *Gide et la Pensée allemande*, also speaks of a Nietzschean influence on Gide. Yet, it should be noted that this study contains a number of observations that somehow render the notion of 'influence' less convincing. Observations on Gide's natural inclinations to adopt a 'Nietzschean' doctrine cannot but question the fact of a too simple assimilation of Nietzsche's thought. A certain common predisposition seems the prerequisite for influence to take place. In this context, for instance, Lang's statement: „Nul plus que [Gide] n'avait „dans l'ombre de son âme“ la haine des principes et des partis-pris, le goût de la vie hasardeuse et de la vertu difficile, la conviction de l'unicité de l'être“ (90). And: „Mieux assimilé que dans les premiers écrits, tantôt sous forme austère, tantôt sous forme burlesque, souvent „goethifié“, transfiguré par la propre expérience, fondu dans un art profondément personnel, le nietzschéisme de Gide n'est en dernière instance que cette liberté qu'il dégage (...)“ (117).

The mentor and his *daimon*[9]: *führen* and *verführen*

In the analysis that follows, I intend to focus on a specific image or topos, that is, a construct, a concern, which is prevalent in Nietzsche and which, in my opinion, must have had a special appeal to both Gide and Hesse --the spiritual and emotional development of the pupil. Both Gide and Hesse have a keen eye for the pupil's formation, which should be specified by the additional observation that their pupils are almost always male. Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, as a text of great inspirational value for both Gide and Hesse, is predicated on the relationship that exists between mentor and pupil. About Zarathustra himself, it should be acknowledged that he is a compassionate teacher and master. Over and over again, Zarathustra takes pain in passing his knowledge on to his followers. On several occasions, he returns from the insular security of his cave in the mountains to the insecurity of the city for no other reason than to teach his pupils and followers how to deal with their lives. Zarathustra is a very responsible teacher whose periodic returns prove his strong love for man. He half-mockingly tells himself:

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[9] Reference is made to the novel, *Demian*, in which the protagonist of that name figures as a character closely linked with the main protagonist. Sinclair speaks of Demian in terms of his „destiny.“ Ziolkowski writes: „Later, when Sinclair has finished his painting of Demian (...), he reflects: „Gradually the feeling arose within me that it was not Beatrice and not Demian, but --I myself. The picture did not resemble me --it wasn't supposed to, I felt- but it was an essential part of my life, it was my inner being, my destiny or my *daimon*““ (142).

> Ach, du liebreicher Narr Zarathustra, du Vertrauens-Überseliger! Aber so warst du immer: immer kamst du vertraulich zu allem Furchtbaren. Jedes Ungetüm wolltest du noch streicheln. Ein Hauch warmen Atems, ein wenig weiches Gezottel an der Tatze --: und gleich warst du bereit, es zu lieben und zu locken. Die *Liebe* ist die Gefahr des Einsamsten, die Liebe zu allem, *wenn es nur lebt!* Zum Lachen ist wahrlich meine Narrheit und meine Bescheidenheit in der Liebe!-- (Z III, preface, 650)

Zarathustra's eulogy on love for man is reminiscent of the biblical Jesus. Both return to man (Zarathustra to the city, and Jesus as God's son down from heaven back to earth) to teach and to save humanity. Zarathustra's "Jünger" are Jesus' disciples, and the "youth he most loved" reminiscent of Jesus' own favourite followers.

Yet, it is also explicitly stated that Zarathustra is a seducer of words: he leads human beings to (*führen*) and seduces them into (*verführen*) believing his truths. The curious character suffering from the leeches he himself has allowed to attach themselves to his arm tells Zarathustra: "[d]aß du einst sprachst, o Zarathustra: „Geist is das Leben, das selber ins Leben schneidet“, das führte und verführte mich zu deiner Lehre" (Z, IV). For the sufferer, Zarathustra is a seducer of words, yet the seduction is not without pain, and the price he pays not without sacrifice. In one of the more curious passages of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, the sufferer suffering from the leeches on his arm refers to Zarathustra himself in terms of a "blood-sucking leech":

> Des Blutegels halber lag ich hier an diesem Sumpfe wie ein Fischer, und schon war mein ausgehängter Arm zehnmal angebissen, da beißt noch ein schönerer Igel nach meinem Blute, Zarathustra selber! O Glück! O Wunder! Gelobt sei dieser Tag, der mich in diesem Sumpf lockte! Gelobt sei der beste lebendigste Schröpfkopf, der heut lebt, gelobt sei der große Gewissens-Blutegel Zarathustra!- (Z, IV)

The sufferer defines Zarathustra here as the big leech that sucks the blood out of the sufferer's 'bad conscience,' and this, on a more symbolical level, turns him into a free man. Yet, it remains unclear at which price: the blood-sucking experience may provide knowledge, that is, a knowledge the sufferer can no longer do without after a certain period of habituation, yet humans need blood and without blood humans stop being human. Nietzsche's choice of the leech cannot be a random choice: the sufferer is now dependent on Zarathustra (in fact he is addicted to him), and if the blood suffering as experience may be wholesome in terms of knowledge, it cannot be so in terms of being human. Zarathustra as "bloody" vamp turns his listeners into passive followers (a follower that may very well lose his human characteristics) addicted to the sweet tones of his voice. Zarathustra, while realizing the power of his own words, gently admonishes himself about the sufferer: "(...) nicht alles dürfte ich vielleicht in deine strengen Ohren gießen!"

The German verb *gießen* is "to pour," and Zarathustra describes his own words here in terms of a sweet liquid. Another seducer of words in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is the "sorcerer." The cave in which the sorcerer as poet has been reciting his "song of gloom" is Zarathustra's, and in it the sorcerer is accused of being a "Falscher, Feiner, [[V]erführer] zu unbekannten Begierden und Wildnissen" (Z, IV). We are asked to believe that the sorcerer's truth enslaves, while Zarathustra's liberate. While Zarathustra brings in the "fresh air," the sorcerer turns the cave into a "sultry" and "poisonous" place. To the old magician it is said:

> Und wehe, wenn solche wie du von der *Wahrheit* Redens und Wesens machen! Wehe allen freien Geistern, welche nicht vor *solchen* Zauberern

> auf der Hut sind! Dahin ist es mit ihrer Freiheit: du lehrst und lockst zurück in Gefängnisse, --du alter schwermütiger Teufel, aus deiner Klage klingt eine Lockpfeife, du gleichst solchen, welche mit ihrem Lobe der Keuschheit heimlich zu Wollüsten laden! (Z, IV)

Yet, ultimately both Zarathustra and the evil magician are seducers of truths. Zarathustra may very well envisage the emotional and intellectual independence of his young followers, but no independent spirit, except perhaps from Zarathustra himself, can be said to figure prominently in the book. Zarathustra's paradoxical advice to turn away from his own truths may have an authentic ring, yet the self-dissolving words of gospel are indicative of the true dynamics that exist between Zarathustra and his young followers: Zarathustra is both guide and playful seducer, and his philosophy, in the final analysis, a game of words and self-negating messages that confuses more than that it deals with the difficulties of his youngsters' lives. The ultimate power of the spiritual guide to influence his followers resides in the negation of his very own message: Zarathustra negates himself as guide, and it is precisely here that his power of persuasion is at its heights. Zarathustra can play with minds.

Zarathustra is ultimately also a book of relationships the two sides of which, in a world of words and thoughts exchanging partnerships, are emotionally and intellectually unequal. In what Nietzsche terms his most profound book, Zarathustra and the evil magician fuse into one character, a character with the power to make sure and with the power to take away the spiritual comfort of his followers:

> Allein gehe ich nun, meine Jünger! Auch ihr geht nun davon und allein! So will ich es. Wahrlich, ich rate euch: geht fort von mir und wehrt euch gegen Zarathustra! Und besser noch: schämt euch seiner! Vielleicht betrog er euch. (...) Nun heiße ich euch, mich verlieren und euch finden, und erst, wenn ihr mich alle verleugnet habt, will ich euch wiederkehren (Z, I).

As previously indicated, my argument is that this very dynamic between mentor and pupil, which as a paradigm is so prevalent in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, must have been striking to both Gide and Hesse, precisely because it corresponded so well with their own emotional lives. Zarathustra's role as spiritual guide to youth in need of direction and understanding, which as a motif harks back to the compassionate teachings of the biblical Jesus, must have been intriguing for writers whose every written work, in some way or other, deals with the intricate roles of mentor and pupil.

The works of both Gide and Hesse are predicated on themes such as the education of the youngster, the patience of the all too compassionate guide, and the development of the relationship between the teacher and his pupil. I would argue that these writers must have been also aware of the darker sides of this dynamic relationship. Elements such as the subtle game of power that exists between the two parties, the realization of the thin borderline that ultimately separates Zarathustra the guide from his role as seducer, the mentor's ability to play with, or to allow himself being played with, the minds of his innocent yet capricious pupils, are all present in the works of Gide and Hesse.

Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is a complex book with an ultimately complex philosophical message, and this no doubt must have intrigued both Gide and Hesse. Yet the theme of the mentor moulding his pupil, which as an image has such high literary potential, must have had the strongest appeal to writers whose main literary preoccupation constitutes the exploration of the very degree of intimacy that can exist between the two sides in this relationship.

Desire and Mythologizing

At this point, it is interesting to observe that both writers have explicitly expressed a deep involvement with Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. In 1930, Gide writes not without exasperation:

> Pour la septième ou huitième fois (au moins), essayé *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. IMPOSSIBLE. Le ton de ce livre m'est insupportable. Et toute mon admiration pour Nietzsche ne parvient pas à me le faire endurer. Enfin il me paraît, dans son oeuvre, quelque peu surérogatoire; ne prendrait de l'importance que si les autres livres n'existaient pas. Sans cesse je l'y sens jaloux du Christ; soucieux de donner au monde un livre qu'on puisse lire *comme on lit l'Évangile*. Si ce livre est devenu plus célèbre que tous les autres de Nietzsche, c'est que, au fond, c'est un *roman*. Mais, pour cela précisément, il s'adresse à la plus basse classe de ses lecteurs: ceux qui ont encore besoin d'un mythe. Et ce que j'aime surtout en Nietzsche, c'est sa haine de la fiction (Journal, I).

Although it is not clear what exactly should be deducted from quotations like these, it seems safe to acknowledge that Gide, at the very least, had a strong fascination with Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. Gide indicates to have lost track of the many attempts to read *Zarathustra*, a book which, in his own words, "not even his high esteem for

Nietzsche succeeds in making him able to endure it." This is a rather strong and negative response for someone who at other times, and in other periods in his life, so highly praises Nietzsche. The quote also indicates a different understanding of *Zarathustra*'s status in Nietzsche's work as a whole: if for Nietzsche *Zarathustra* is the most important work, not just in his oeuvre, but of all the works ever written, Gide, strikingly enough, calls it a "rather superfluous" text. Gide's disapproval in this cannot be coincidental: it may have a great deal to do with Nietzsche's boastful display of competence and talent.

Even more striking, in my opinion, is Gide's reproach that Nietzsche wrote a "[fictional] novel" (instead of philosophy proper?). One might be struck by the nature of Gide's reproach. How can someone whose greater part of his life is dedicated to the writing of novels, or at least fictional texts, who in fact with his experimental novel, *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, attempts to define a new conception of the novel itself, speak so adamantly of Nietzsche's "hatred of fiction"?

For our analysis on the intricacies of the relationship between mentor and pupil, the interesting point to make here would be Gide's comparison of Nietzsche to Christ, and the observation that Nietzsche is envious of Christ's exemplary role as guide. From a psychological point of view the key phrase of the quote is the one in which is expressed the feeling that accompanies Gide in reading Nietzsche's work: "[s]ans cesse je l'y sens jaloux du Christ, soucieux de donner au monde un livre qu'on puisse lire *comme on lit l'Évangile*" (italics are Gide's). Yet, who now exactly is envious of whom? Might Gide not have been envious of Nietzsche, given the fact that he himself can be said to have imitated the teachings of Christ in his *Nourritures terrestres*? Might the feelings of jealousy that Gide attributes to Nietzsche, which as observation seems true enough, not be a case of self-projection, that is, a reading into someone else of feelings one may secretly be consumed by oneself? It should also be noted that the *Nourritures* is a book which Gide, according to most critics, if not according to Gide himself, wrote after having familiarised himself with Nietzsche and his *Zarathustra*.

The argument here may be rather speculative. Ultimately we ourselves might be accused of reading too much into an opinion that is only casually expressed. At the same time, however, the deeper, more suppressed feelings of envy often lie in that which is expressed with the highest degree of carelessness. Expressed that is, in the casual rather than in the explicit statement. And, in the handling of these explicit statements on Nietzsche, I would propose a similar analytical procedure.

In the quote, Gide indicates that the feelings of envy that he reads into Nietzsche are experienced "incessantly" whenever he takes up Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. The persistent character of these feelings in Gide, however, should make us suspicious about what it is that Gide is telling us. For Gide, it is the "tone" of *Zarathustra* as narrative that makes it "unbearable" and "impossible" to read.

Yet, as previously indicated, Nietzsche's tone in *Zarathustra* is very much like Gide's own in his *Nourritures*, or, in terms of dynamics, like that of any other of his novels in which the relationship between mentor and pupil plays an important role. The tone of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is the seductive tone of the teacher who wishes and who is able to persuade with words. Gide, by his reference to Nietzsche and to Christ, indicates that for him the central theme of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is the image of the teacher and mentor, who is eager to persuade and who is also very capable of persuading his young followers. Yet, given the fact that this very image is the central image of Gide's oeuvre as a whole, and given the vehemence here with which Gide dismisses Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, the feelings of jealousy that Gide reads into Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* may very well be Gide's own. Gide, too, as a playful seducer of words and ideas, is a character more close to than removed from the Nietzschean 'Zarathustra' character.

For both Gide and Hesse, their attitude towards Nietzsche and his works seems to be poured first and foremost into the mould of the mentor-pupil relationship. Nietzsche is perceived as the mentor, and they themselves as his inevitable pupils, even if immediate allegiance is disclaimed. Gide at times may reject Nietzsche as spiritual or intellectual guide, yet the involvement with Nietzsche as presence and authority, that is, as an almost mythologized figure with a strong personality and will, must define Gide and other followers, if only because of their strong admiration, as his inferior pupils.

As previously indicated, Gide defines Nietzsche as a menacing shadow that hovers over the road he was sure to have walked on by himself. In the preface to Gide's revised edition of the *Nourritures terrestres*, Gide states:

> Ma vénération pour Nietzsche est trop grande pour que je ne me laisse pas volontiers enrôler parmi ses disciples, mais ceux qui reconnaissent (ils sont nombreux) l'influence du *Zarathoustra* dans mes *Nourritures terrestres* anticipent un peu... Il y a parenté d'esprit, non descendance. Mon émotion, lorsque plus tard je lus Nietzsche, n'eût pas été si vive, si déjà de moi-même je ne m'étais point engagé sur sa route, sur cette route où je pensais être seul à m'aventurer, où tout à coup je vis se dresser devant moi son ombre immense (*NT*, 2nd edition).

Beyond the more obvious claim of artistic integrity, Gide's quotation is particularly interesting from the perspective of the writer's choice of words and images to describe Nietzsche. Gide speaks of "strong admiration" and "strong emotion" in relation to Nietzsche. In the final sentence, Gide uses the metaphor of the shadow. In fact, Nietzsche as shadow emerges as "in a start," and the shadow which Gide says to encounter is "huge." The message of the quote seems contradictory: though on the one hand Gide disclaims Nietzsche as influence, he continues to speak on the other of Nietzsche as a menacing shadow.

It seems to me that although Nietzsche may be disclaimed as intellectual authority, he is nonetheless acclaimed in his *role* as such. The picture that emerges is that of the son who stands in the shadow of his father. I would argue that Nietzsche somehow figures here as the internalized guru and teacher, yet internalized as an image rather than an energizing influence. Nietzsche is more guru than philosopher, however challenging his philosophy, more the teacher than a conveyor of profound thought, however efficient his skills in passing on meaning. A compassionate guru needs a compassionate follower, a compassionate teacher needs a pupil who feels likewise. In Gide's mind, Nietzsche somehow complies to the rules of a literary imagination.

The final sentences of the quote evoke the rather discomforting (is it just discomfort?) picture of a hunter and his prey: the latter finds itself taken by surprise on a lonely road by the strength and power of the predator. Nietzsche's role of powerful teacher is not entirely without danger: for Gide, both he and Nietzsche participate in a complex yet exciting formula of mentor searching for pupil (and vice versa), an intricate game the dynamics of which, as Gide realizes himself, are far from innocent.

Hermann Hesse, who in his *Nürnberger Reise* indicates to have been "enchanted" by the reading of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* as a twenty-year old, sets up a similar configuration between mentor and pupil in relation to Nietzsche as a powerful authority. With Hesse, too, Nietzsche is more than an author whose work one simply reads, or more than a philosopher whose thought one just simply appreciates and assumes. For Hesse, as someone for whom the "mentor meets pupil" construct is no less prevalent than for a Gide, Nietzsche is especially interesting in his role of the guru, the teacher and the master. In a comment to his 'Zarathustrian' political essay, *Zarathustras Wiederkehr: Ein Wort an die deutsche Jugend*, Hesse describes the way in which the text's creation, "almost subconscious[ly]," followed in his mind a Nietzschean imperative. The text, written in a short stretch of a couple of days only just after the war in 1919, and meant to appeal to a forgotten German inner strength, is, in Hesse's own words, reminiscent of Nietzsche as the "last passionate priest" of an "all but extinguished German inner power."[10] Because the quote presents so explicitly Hesse's attitude towards Nietzsche as a spiritual authority, in contrast to a pure intellectual one, it is worth rendering here in full:

> Mir scheint, ein Leser mit zartem Sprachgefühl wird durch meine Schrift zwar an den Zarathustra erinnert werden, wird aber auch sofort erkennen, daß sie gewiß keine Stilnachahmung versucht. Sie erneuert, sie klingt an, aber sie imitiert nicht. Ein Imitator des Zarathustra hätte eine Menge von Stilmerkmalen benutzt, die ich völlig wegließ. Auch muß ich gestehen, daß ich Nietzsches Zarathustra seit nahezu zehn Jahren nicht mehr in Händen gehabt habe. Nein, der Titel und der Stil meiner kleinen Schrift entstand wahrlich nicht aus dem Bedürfnis nach einer Maske, oder gar aus einer spielerischen Lust zu Stilversuchen. Auch wer den Geist dieser Schrift ablehnt, muß doch -scheint mir- den hohen Druck ahnen, unter dem sie entstand. Daß sie an Nietzsche anklinge und den Geist seines Zarathustra beschwöre, das merkte ich selbst erst während dem fast bewußtlosen

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[10] I have translated „Geist" here with „inner power," instead of the more literal „spirit."

> Schreiben, das sich völlig explosiv vollzog. Aber seit Monaten, nein, seit Jahren hatte sich in mir eine andere Einstellung zu Nietzsche gebildet. Nicht zu seinem Gedanken, nicht zu seiner Dichtung. Wohl aber zu Nietzsche, dem Menschen, dem Mann. Mehr und mehr erschien er mir, seit dem jammervollen Versagen unserer deutschen Geistigkeit im Kriege, als der letzte einsame Vertreter eines deutschen Geistes, eines deutschen Mutes, einer deutschen Mannhaftigkeit, die gerade unter den Geistigen unseres Volkes ausgestorben zu sein schien. Hatte nicht seine Vereinsamung zwischen Kollegen voll verantwortungslosen Strebertums ihm den Ernst seiner 'Aufgabe' gezeigt? War er nicht im Grimm der wilhelminischen Epoche, schließlich zum Antideutschen geworden? Und war nicht er es, der einsame Nietzsche, der vergrollte Verächter des deutschen Kaiserrausches, der letzte glühende Priester eines scheinbar absterbenden deutschen Geistes --war nicht er es, der Unzeitgemäße und Vereinsamte, dessen Stimme stärker als jede andere zur deutschen Jugend sprach? [...] An diesen Geist, als dessen letzten Prediger ich Nietzsche empfand, wollte und mußte ich appellieren.[11]

It is not surprising that much like Gide's appeal to the artistic integrity of his *Nourritures*, Hesse disclaims having been immediately influenced by Nietzsche's style and content. Hesse claims that though the essay may appeal to a Nietzschean spirit, it does not imitate a pure Nietzschean style. Yet, though Nietzsche's influence may be negated on an ideological, or even artistic, level, his importance on a personal level is nonetheless adamantly acknowledged. Hesse speaks of his interest in Nietzsche as "human being" and as "man," instead of his thought or his writings. Nietzsche is still the influential philosopher, yet the philosopher is more revered because of his personality than because of his doctrine. He is important more because of what he *is* and *represents* in the author's mind, than because of what he *says* as a philosopher.[12]

For both Gide and Hesse, it seems that the relationship between mentor and pupil is interesting especially from the perspective of the personal dynamics of which the relationship is made up. Nietzsche as compassionate teacher seems more important and interesting than his role as a conveyor of thought. At least at this later point in their lives. The dynamics between Nietzsche's status of teacher as opposed to the playful subservience of the pupil intrigues more than the content of the message that the teacher conveys. From this perspective, it is interesting to note that Hesse is not averse to a certain mythologizing of Nietzsche --as if Hesse desperately wishes to admire Nietzsche. In the quote, he compares Nietzsche to a "fiery [and passionate] priest," and, a little later, as the "last preacher of a[n] [extinguished] spirit."

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[11] From: „Zu *Zarathustras Wiederkehr*." Gesammelte Werke 11, 41-2

[12] Hesse, in his essay, also emphasizes Nietzsche as opponent of German society in the ‚Kaiserzeit.'

In this respect, it is interesting to see to what extent Hesse can be said to indulge in a certain mythologizing not just of Nietzsche, but also of his contemporary, Gide. Though both writers cannot be said to have maintained an extensive correspondence, there has been a certain mutual exposure, and contact between them in the form of letters. The letter to Gide that Hesse writes in March 1933 is a striking example of how Hesse is taken in by the personal dynamics of the relationship between mentor and pupil, and how prevailing this configuration of intimates positioning themselves in relation to each other is in terms of his personal life. Hesse's letter reads:

> (...) Ein Gymnasiast liebt und bewundert einen etwas ältern Kameraden, würde es nie wagen, ihn anzureden, sieht ihn schon, den Unerreichbaren, für immer entschwinden, da wendet der Bewunderte, der schon bald die Schule verläßt, dem Jüngern sein Gesicht zu, lächelt und nickt ihm zu ... -so etwa ist Ihr Gruß für mich. (...) (Darum darf ich Ihre Worte aus aufrichtigem Herzen erwidern, ich kenne Bücher von Ihnen schon seit der Zeit, als die „enge Pforte" und der „Immoralist" zum erstenmal in deutscher Sprache erschienen, noch lang vor dem Kriege. Seither hat kein französischer Autor unsrer Zeit mich so viel beschäftigt und ist so von mir geliebt worden.)[13]

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[13] Hesse's letter is a reply to Gide's letter of March 11, 1933: „Depuis longtemps je désire vous écrire. Cette pensée me tourmente --que l'un de nous deux puisse quitter la terre sans que vous ayez eu ma sympathie

Again, the choice of words reveals the true nature of the dynamics Hesse wishes the relationship to consist of: Hesse as pupil, from a distance, says to "love" and to "admire" Gide as the more experienced, and also slightly aloof, superior student. The relationship is defined in terms of the by now familiar paradigm of mentor and pupil, and what seems particularly important in this passage is the fact that the mentor exists as an icon. The thrill of the relationship for Hesse apparently resides in the hidden feelings of admiration the pupil has for his superior fellow student, and, as part of this response, in the compassionate acknowledgement of these feelings by the same student, but now as a gesture and gift bestowed on the pupil.

As Hesse indicates, the message which the student conveys is of secondary importance only: Hesse emphasizes that the pupil does not "approach" the superior student. Yet, again, of interest here is the subtle interplay between the two sides in this intriguing configuration of two people playing the game of mutual attraction. The game is one of idealisation and admiration, of distancing and approaching, of smiles and returned smiles. In fact, the game is almost like a flirtation that occurs between two strangers.

In his analysis of Hesse's novel, *Demian*, Theodore Ziolkowski situates the novel in the tradition of the *Bildungsroman*, a genre which, as Ziolkowski indicates, "flourished particularly during the age of German Romanticism" (89). Ziolkowski, too, by referring to

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profonde pour chacun des livres de vous que j'ai lus. Entre tous *Demian*, et *Knulp* m'ont ravi. Puis ce délicieux et mystérieux *Morgenlandfahrt* et enfin votre *Goldmund*, que je n'ai pas encore achevé --et que je déguste lentement, craignant de l'achever trop vite."

Hesse's preference for the *Bildungsroman*, acknowledges the importance of the mentor and pupil construct for Hesse (though Ziolkowski has a tendency to restrict Hesse's use of the *Bildungroman* to *Demian*). Ziolkowski states:

> Characteristically the *Bildungsroman* traces the development of a youth during his formative years from immaturity and uncertainty of purpose to the total integration of his personality and capabilities --precisely the process that we witness in *Demian*. (...) A specific characteristic of the Romantic *Bildungsroman* that becomes important in *Demian* is the presence of a spiritual mentor who educates the hero according to the principles of the group that he represents (89-90).

Though Ziolkowski acknowledges that Hesse "transformed and expanded the dimensions of the traditional form beyond the limits it had hitherto observed,"[14] he fails to identify the most striking difference with previous works belonging to this genre. The passages from Gide and Hesse that we have previously elaborated already hint at this point: the erotic dimension of the relationship between master and pupil. From the *Nourritures terrestres* and the *Faux-Monnayeurs* to *Demian* and *Narziß und Goldmund*, the relationships upon which the authors elaborate with near unbridled passion have in all cases explicitly erotic undertones. Ignoring this would be, in my opinion, an important omission. From Bernard to Lafcadio, Olivier and Caloub, from Goldmund to Siddhartha, Demian and Narziß, --the large majority of Gide's and Hesse's protagonists are young and beautiful, and all can be said to somehow figure in an ambiguous relationship with either their mentor or pupil.[15]

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[14] About Hesse's innovations, Ziolkowski states: „[t]he main changes (…) are: internationalization of the ideal represented by the group; structuring by the use of prefiguration; broadening of the novel's implications by the use of myth and symbol in a characteristically modern way“ (91).

The fact that these protagonists are physically appealing may appear a trivial point. Yet, it is not when seen against the background of the Nietzschean *Übermensch*. All of these protagonists can be said to share characteristics with Nietzsche's version of the *Übermensch*, yet at no place in his work does Nietzsche elaborate on the physical beauty of this new type of human being. In fact, in one of the sections of his *Zarathustra*, Zarathustra is said to come across the "ugliest human being" of all humanity (that is also physically), and it is precisely this man whom Zarathustra initially identifies as the "higher type of human being." About the ugliest man, Zarathustra says: "Keinen fand ich noch, der sich tiefer verachtet hätte: auch Das ist Höhe. Wehe, war Der vielleicht der höhere Mensch, dessen Schrei ich hörte?"[16]

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[15] One of the more striking examples in Hesse is the relationship between Demian and Sinclair, yet the special dynamics between mentor and pupil also appears in a novel such as *Siddhartha*. The narrator emphasizes the 'bewitching' qualities of the protagonist: „Indem [Siddhartha] sich nahe vor dem Samana aufstellte, mit gesammelter Seele, fing er den Blick des Alten mit seinen Blicken ein, bannte ihn, machte ihn stumm, machte ihn willenlos, unterwarf ihn seinem Willen, befahl ihm, lautlos zu tun, was er von ihm verlangte. Der alte Mann wurde stumm, sein Auge wurde starr, sein Wille gelähmt, seine Arme hingen herab, machtlos war er Siddharthas Bezauberung erlegen“ (23). About Siddhartha's ambiguous relationship with his friend and pupil, Govinda, it is said: „Govinda stand vor ihm [in his dream], in einem gelben Asketengewand. Traurig sah Govinda aus, traurig fragte er: „Warum hast du mich verlassen?“ Da umarmte er Govinda, schlang seine Arme um ihn, und indem er ihn an seine Brust zog und küßte, war es nicht Govinda mehr, sondern ein Weib, und aus des Weibes Gewand quoll eine volle Brust, an der lag Siddhartha und trank, süß und stark schmeckte die Milch dieser Brust. Sie schmeckte nach Weib und Mann, nach Sonne und Wald, nach Tier und Blume, nach jeder Frucht, nach jeder Lust. Sie machte trunken und bewußtlos“ (43). In one of his works, Hesse himself speaks of the intricate linkage between the many protagonists: „Es fiel mir vor allem wieder einmal auf, wie die meisten meiner größeren Erzählungen nicht, wie ich bei ihrer Entstehung glaubte, neue Probleme und neue Menschenbilder aufstellten (...), sondern nur die paar mir gemäßen Probleme und Typen variierend wiederholten, wenn auch von einer neuen Stufe des Lebens und der Erfahrung aus. So war mein Goldmund nicht nur im Klingsor, sondern auch schon im Knulp präformiert, wie Kastalien und Josef Knecht in Mariabronn und in Narziß (...)“ (GW 10, 343-344).

[16] The section in *Zarathustra* is entitled: „Der häßlichste Mensch.“ About Zarathustra's curious encounter, we read: „(...) Da aber sah er, als er die Augen aufthat, Etwas, das am Wege sass, gestaltet wie ein Mensch und kaum wie ein Mensch, etwas Unaussprechliches. Und mit Einem Schlage überfiel Zarathustra die grosse Scham darob, dass er so Etwas mit den Augen angesehn habe: erröthend bis hinauf an sein weisses Haar, wandte er den Blick ab und hob den Fuss, dass er diese schlimme Stelle verlasse,“ *KSA* IV, 327-332.

Though neither this character, nor any of the other protagonists in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, can ultimately be identified as the new type of human being for which Zarathustra sets out on his quest, the emphasis on the physical beauty of the protagonist in Gide and Hesse is an important characteristic that deviates from the Nietzschean example. The protagonists in Gide and Hesse, no matter how closely they may appear to be related to the Nietzschean ideal of the *Übermensch*, are characters that can only exist in this intricate configuration of mentor and pupil, that is, as components of a formula in which both the mentor and the pupil function as objects, not even so much of mutual admiration, but of sexual desire.

And thus, we may conclude this section by emphasizing, once again, that both Gide's and Hesse's interest, as far as a Nietzschean model is concerned, primarily resides in these intricate dynamics that exist between mentor and pupil. Zarathustra's teachings as such are not irrelevant, yet his role as compassionate guru (or, the reverse, as passionate and playful pupil) is ultimately more rewarding. Insofar as the Nietzschean *Übermensch*, or the Nietzschean child, plays a role in their works, the character impersonating these traits can only function under the imperative of its mentor's or pupil's erotically disposed gaze. The young protagonists in both Gide and Hesse never just stand by themselves, but always in relation to their mentor or pupil (depending on whether this Nietzschean-inspired protagonist is a mentor or pupil himself). And as such, they are always an object of desire.

These protagonists can thus be said to function in the works as sexual personae. Beyond the surface of what might be termed a Nietzschean-inspired ideology hides a construct through which the authors' desire finds expression. Beyond the appearances of philosophical exposure, there is an almost archetypal character, with a set of characteristics that largely remain the same throughout the works, onto which the authors' desire is projected.

Egon Schwarz, in his article on Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, among other things, speaks of Hesse's use of humour as one of the four Nietzschean motifs in this novel. Yet, the philosophy of a life-redeeming humour does not exist outside of the characters impersonating this philosophy. The liberating laugh or the compassionate smile in both Gide and Hesse almost never exist beyond the person and character who laughs and who smiles. In Gide and Hesse theory must yield to men of flesh and blood --the smile is always the flashy smile of the youngster. And ultimately, when speaking more specifically of the difference between them as thinkers and writers, it must also reside in their different vocational inclinations. If Nietzsche is still more a philosopher, Gide and Hesse must be psychologists. Or to be more precise: eroto-psychologists.[17]

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[17] The primacy of eroticism over philosophy may be a point of controversy. Ziolkowski states in his section on Nietzschean influence in Hesse's *Demian*: „(...) Man, as Sinclair comes to realize, is not a complete and perfect being as he comes into the world, but only a trajectory of nature in the direction of the perfect [illegible] (...). This is clearly Hesse's way of describing Nietzsche's *Übermensch*" (104). Yet, it should be noted that, if the concept is of any true relevance, Hesse's *Übermensch* is surely Demian, and Demian does not exist outside of this 'mentor meets pupil' configuration (which, as we have seen, is also based on desire). Though the authors' alleged homosexual inclination is not the issue here (in the sense that they don't stand 'on trial'), it is nonetheless interesting to read Stephen Koch's article on *Narziß und Goldmund*. Koch refers to a different set of dynamics that animate the main protagonists. He states: „Even gossipy America has kept surprisingly well the open secret that throughout his life, Hesse was an overt homosexual. (...) That fact casts another strange light on this book about woman-lust, and on the final destitution of its „intellectual" --the narcissist whose dream is of boys. It was surely as Narcissus that Hesse saw himself-- mentor to youth, using his wisdom to liberate their sensuous creativity and thereby forcing them beyond him" (*„Prophet of Youth: Hermann Hesse's* Narcissus and Goldmund." In: *Hermann Hesse: A collection of criticism*. Ed. Judith Liebmann. McGraw-Hill, 1977). In fact, Hesse's own opinion on the erotic dimension of these friendships is helpful in this respect. In a letter written in 1932, he states on the "Freundschaften Goldmund-Narziß, Veraguth-Burckhardt, Hesse-Knulp etc.: "Daß diese Freundschaften, weil zwischen Männern bestehend, völlig frei von Erotik seien, ist ein Irrtum. Ich bin geschlechtlich 'normal' und habe nie körperlich erotische Beziehungen zu Männern gehabt, aber die Freundschaften deshalb für völlig unerotisch zu halten, scheint mir doch falsch zu sein. Im Fall Narziß ist es besonders klar. Goldmund bedeutet für Narziß auch die Liebe,

Philosophical Underpinnings in *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* and *Narziß und Goldmund*: Nietzschean Traces

In the final part of this chapter, I will be dealing more specifically with the ways in which a set of philosophical premises figures in the works of Gide and Hesse, some of which can be said to relate to Nietzsche. As previously indicated, I will not speak of a presumed obvious Nietzschean influence. Fiction, as a more immediate expression of the writer him- or herself, must inevitably challenge, and ultimately undermine, whatever attempt at faithful reproduction of a circulating philosophical theory. Instead, it will be more useful to speak in terms of a certain effect that Nietzsche's thought is likely to have produced in the works of these writers.

I will focus, then, as a method, on similarities between the three thinkers, and attempt to explain each of these concepts in terms of what it is that makes them nonetheless somehow distinct and specific to the thinker or writer that uses them. Ultimately, I will speak of a Nietzschean trace in the works.

This method may provide little certainty as to the exact origin of a given concept, attitude or thought. After all the trace can only be a trace, and though origin may be suggested, it cannot be actually proven. Yet, at the same time it may very well be a

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die Sinnenwärme, das Begehrte und Verbotene" (From a letter to Mia Engel, March 1931). David Horrocks speaks in his article on a Nietzschean influence in Hesse's *Der Steppenwolf* in terms of a „highly derivative work," yet it should be noted that by doing this Horrocks turns the novel into nothing more than a philosophical treatise. Horrocks defines the novel's protagonists as versions of the Zarathustrian *Übermensch*, and their function in the novel as guiding the main protagonist, Haller, to this elevated state of manhood himself. These protagonists thus merely function as operators of a philosophical theory. The fact is, however, that the novel exists as a novel instead of treatise, and that the characters in it must challenge the philosophical theory. In Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, too, the relationship between Hermine and Haller (Hermine method which, in its careful exploration, and because of the elusive nature of the question of origin with which it deals, can be the only appropriate method to investigate influence, exactly because it does not provide any conclusive guarantees.

As already indicated in the introduction, I will focus on two specific works of literature: Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* and Hesse's *Narziß und Goldmund*. Both works can be said to be written at a later point in their careers, that is, well after the time in which the authors' earliest exposure to Nietzsche and to other theories of their period must have taken place. The choice of these later works, when speaking of a certain appropriation of what ultimately one may identify --or perhaps choose to identify-- as a Nietzschean style, thought, idea or image in these works, is important since the later date indicates an ongoing preoccupation with something which is at least very similar to Nietzsche. The Nietzschean trace may be less clear in these works, yet the ongoing preoccupation of something which relates these writers to Nietzsche must indicate at the very least, if not a downright influence, then at least the extent of a similar mind-set.[18]

Bruce Marcoon, in his short analysis on Hesse's *Demian*, discusses the author's tightly structured narrative model in this novel and the three more or less recurrent sections of which this model consists:

> The first [of these sections] deals with the protagonist's awareness of an inharmonious world and some action which causes the loss of his innocence

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who at some point also figures as the masculine Hermann) is not purely philosophical: eroticism is a powerful subdiscourse (underlying and subverting the philosophical one) in *Der Steppenwolf* too.

[18] Hesse starts writing *Narziß und Goldmund* in 1927, and finishes the manuscript in 1929. The book is published in 1930. Gide starts his *Faux-Monnayeurs* in 1919 and finishes in 1925. Publication of the novel is in 1926.

> and can be paralleled with the biblical fall from grace. The second section, which is the longest, concerns itself with the period of anguish and despair which follows the fall. The third portion contains some degree of enlightenment for the protagonist. In one manner or other, he learns to come to terms with his life and with himself (11).

Though Marcoon's argument may be reproached for its simplification of the actual material, I will hold that the narrative's tight structure is representative of most other narratives by these authors, and that it is strongly reminiscent of a Nietzschean philosophical model. Their works share the description of a very similar psychological development of their protagonists, and they share the presence of a very similar philosophical dimension. The structure of the narrative (the protagonist's strong feelings of doubt are succeeded by those of trial and purgation, and, eventually, by the protagonist acquiring a certain degree of enlightenment) is evocative of the psychological stages through which Nietzsche wishes his own superior human being to be defined. Zarathustra, himself, speaks of the camel, the lion and the child, a process of subsequent transformations which finalize in the coming into being of the *Übermensch*. Zarathustra says: "Drei Verwandlungen nenne ich euch des Geistes: wie der Geist zum Kameele wird, und zum Löwen das Kameel, und zum Kinde zuletzt der Löwe (Z, I)"

In *Les Faux-monnayeurs* and *Narziß und Goldmund*, one can observe a structure that is predicated on a very similar psychological staging of the protagonist, even though with Gide this model may be less apparent. Scepticism towards established morality and religion characterizes the main protagonists, and a strong desire to escape from societal and parental constraints ultimately drives them to an act of freedom. Many strive for self-acceptance. Although traditional religion is presented throughout the works, it is usually rejected and its concepts considered obsolete. Religious and bourgeois hypocrisy are vigorously denounced, and the failure in the works of those who wish to adhere to the old conventional institutions must reflect the authors' need for a new philosophy of life. Instead of the promulgation of a religious transcendence, which is false in their eyes, they propose a philosophy which involves the full and unconditional acceptance of life itself.

The insufficiency of traditional religion

The quest of transcendence: mother versus father

In *Narziß und Goldmund*, one can refer in this context to the protagonist's raging words of truth against the Christian faith, words that are uttered in the very last moments of his agony of death. While confronted with the terrors of disease and deprivation, Hesse's main protagonist, Goldmund, reveals the very truths of death and decay to be the essence of human existence. In a diatribe of bitter irony against the great austerity and asceticism of his teacher, Goldmund remarks:

> Hast du Angst, Narziß (...), hast du was gemerkt? Ja, Beehrtester, die Welt is voll von Tod, auf jedem Zaun sitzt er, hinter jedem Baum steht er, und es hilft euch nichts, daß ihr Mauern baut, und Schlafsäle, und Kapellen und Kirchen, er guckt durchs Fenster, er lacht, er kennt jeden von euch so genau, mitten in der Nacht hört ihr ihn vor euren Fenstern lachen und eure Namen sagen (187).

Hesse's depiction of medieval Germany paralysed by the horrors of the plague has a valid counterpart in Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*. The ephemerity of life, the cruelty of fate and the all too human incapacity to communicate, all reflect Gide's underlying doubts vis-à-vis any theory of universal coherence. If little Gontran strongly wishes to experience "je ne sais quoi de sublime et de rare, [et] écouter une communication de l'au-delà" in the presence of his deceased grandfather, he fails in creating the proper spiritual ambience, and is tragically abandoned to the experience of materialized death.

> [Gontran] regarde les mains exsangues du mort, et se demande combien de temps encore les ongles continueront à pousser. Il est choqué de voir ces mains disjointes. Il voudrait les rapprocher, les unir, leur faire tenir le crucifix. (...) mais le contact de cette chair froide le fait faiblir. Il croit qu'il va se trouver mal (59-60).

If traditional religion has lost its appeal, it should be noted that both authors, much like Nietzsche, are nonetheless engaged in the quest for a transcendence of life's harsh reality. Goldmund, as the key protagonist of Hesse's novel, must inevitably represent the author's philosophical message of a coming to terms with life without the traditional security of religion. Goldmund's alternative is that of the innocence with which the child encounters its world: "Goldmund ging auf alles ein, er war unersättlich und biegsam wie ein Kind, er stand jeder Verführung offen: nur dadurch war er selbst so verführend" (136). Though Goldmund's concept of love is far removed from rigid bourgeois morality, his love is said to be as unconditional as the Nietzschean child. Goldmund remains loyal to himself, and to a world in which he fully embraces the realm of the senses. Just as the

Nietzschean child that gives in to the paradoxes of its life, Goldmund transforms the horrors of his own life into salutary experiences. His answer to the ravages of the plague is one of fascination and curiosity rather than of fear:

> Von einem Toten zum andern ging Goldmunds Blick. (...) Aufmerksam betrachtete Goldmund alles. Es sah ohne Zweifel in dieser Hütte ziemlich scheußlich aus, und der Leichengeruch war wüst; dennoch hatte für Goldmund das alles eine tiefe Anziehungskraft, es war alles voll Größe und Schicksal, so wahr, so unverlogen, irgend etwas daran gewann seine Liebe und drang ihm in die Seele (266).

Goldmund can be said to resemble the Nietzschean child, who joyfully rebuilds the castle that is previously destroyed by the sea and by its own hands. The hidden essence of existence is acquired by living rather than rationalising life, by giving in to the eternal flux, by savouring the immediacy of the moment. Destruction itself is the prerequisite for true knowledge. "Fighting death (...) during [his] last desperate struggle" is for Goldmund "the strongest emotion of all," for it leads him towards the revealing truth of the "tenacity of life inside [him]" (142). The "loving, autumnal and satiated sound of death" is transformed into a salutary life-generating incentive, which, in its full intensity, provokes a strong commitment to life, and a will to transcend his own finality. In fact, death itself is at times "sweet and seductive," and, as such, it strongly identifies with the comforting image of the mother: "[i]n [Goldmund] the wild song of death had a completely different sound, not bony and severe, but sweet rather, and seductive, motherly, an enticement to come home" (223).

If the version of this liberated Nietzschean infant in Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* is less explicit, the concept of the awakening spirit is no less prevalent. Though to a lesser degree, and definitely more tentative than Goldmund's surrender to life adventure, Bernard chooses "tout le surprenant qui l'attend," and rejoices about his own special status: "(...) j'irai vers mon destin. Quel bon mot; l'aventure! Ce qui doit advenir (...). Je ne sais pas si d'autres sont comme moi, mais dès que je suis réveillée, j'aime à mépriser ceux qui dorment" (75). The narrator's admiration of his nephew's strong sense of revolt is part of the same concept of a gradual awakening: "Combien j'aime à sentir chez Olivier tant de curiosité, d'impatiente insatisfaction du passé" (125). The reversal of roles between instructor and pupil, which is a procedure that is present in both novels, not to mention the subsequent blurring of intellectual authority, strengthen the idea of a sense of innocence to be regained. About Olivier, his mentor remarks:

> (...) maintenant, il me semble que c'est [Olivier] qui, par contre-coup, m'(...) instruit. Combien tout ce que j'ai écrit précédemment me paraît aujourd'hui tristement, ennuyeusement et ridiculement raisonnable! (125).

Though Gide's novel denounces more than it proposes, the denunciation does reveal at least to a certain extent the nature of the alternative. The narrator-protagonist's condemnation of religious facticity echoes a Nietzschean quest for authenticity, and a life philosophy that is centred on man's earthly existence. Edouard says to himself:

> A mesure qu'une âme s'enfonce dans la dévotion, elle perd le sens, le goût, le besoin, l'amour de la réalité. (...) Pour moi, qui n'ai rien tant à coeur que d'y

> voir clair, je reste ahuri devant l'épaisseur de mensonge où peut se complaire un dévot (138).

Lilian's narrative authority may be questioned, yet the sharing of her experience is presented as genuine, and the piece of advice she gives to her lover not without authenticity. Her philosophy of detachment and survival has a remarkably unaffected resonance among the narrator's rendering of so many counterfeit enunciations:

> Et quand (...) je suis revenue à moi, j'ai compris que je n'étais plus, que je ne pourrais plus jamais être la même, la sentimentale jeune fille d'auparavant; j'ai compris que j'avais laissé une partie de moi sombrer (...), qu'à un tas de sentiments délicats, désormais, je couperais les doigts et les poignets pour les empêcher de monter et de faire sombrer mon coeur (84).

Though hypocrisy and opportunism obtain a somewhat satirical dimension in characters such as Profitendieu and Pasteur Vedel, Gide's criticism of the conventional family nucleus is nonetheless harsh and unquestioned. The growing paranoia and mutual irritation that contaminate the household of the old couple de la Pérouse reflects Gide's scepticism towards traditional conceptions about relationships and the status of marriage. The narrator sharply refers to the old couple in terms of "deux êtres, attachés l'un à l'autre pour la vie, qui se font abominablement souffrir," and continues with his somewhat provocative statement that if "le frottement est réciproque, la vie conjugale n'est plus qu'un enfer" (205). Gide's acrid attack on bourgeois family life suggests his penchant for a different type of relationship.

In contrast to the prevalently negative image of the father, that of the mother is generally positive, and corresponds as such with the author's philosophical message. Unlike the father, who seems to represent the self-alienating virtues of reason and spirit, the mother appears as the symbol of the world of the senses, and, eventually with Hesse's novel, of Goldmund's fidelity to his true self. She represents a convergence of body and spirit. In his last moments of agony just before death, Goldmund addresses his prayer to his eternal mother, and not to the father.

> (...) ein Bild aus der Tiefe seiner Erinnerung [antwortete ihm], das Bild [seiner eigenen Mutter], schön und lebendig, wie er es seit den Klosterzeiten nie mehr gesehen hatte. An sie richtete er seine Klage, ihr weinte er dies unerträgliche Leid des Sterbenmüssens entgegen, ihr gab er sich anheim, ihr gab er den Wald, die Sonne, die Augen, die Hände, ihr gab er sein ganzes Wesen und Leben zurück, in die mütterlichen Hände (340-1).

In conformity with Hesse's depiction of the father's oppressive influence, one can also refer to the *Faux-Monnayeurs*, in which a similar type of liberation from authority occurs, even though the protagonists' emancipation may be less dramatic and certain. Goldmund's identification with his mother resembles only too clearly Bernard's joyful awareness of his fatherless status, and his release from the necessity of taking after him: "ne pas savoir qui est son père, c'est ça qui guérit de la peur de lui ressembler":

> J'ai compris (...) que je dois cesser de vous considérer comme mon père, et c'est pour moi un immense soulagement. En me sentant si peu d'amour pour vous, j'ai longtemps cru que j'étais un fils dénaturé; je préfère savoir que je ne suis pas votre fils du tout (24).

Although the reassuring presence of the mother with Gide is less evident than with Hesse's *Narziß und Goldmund*, it remains unquestioned that only his fictional "mothers" escape from severe criticism. The quotation from Fontenelle with which the narrator introduces his fourth chapter is only too clear in this respect. Its message of an intuitive female authenticity, despite whatever fatherly-inspired dogma, is lucid:

> Mon père était une bête, mais ma mère avait de l'esprit, elle était quiétiste; c'était une petite femme douce qui me disait souvent: Mon fils, vous serez damné. Mais cela ne lui faisait point de peine (49).

Despite the exposure, however, of an apparently consistent life philosophy of the body fusing with the mind, one can legitimately express a certain scepticism towards the determination with which both Gide and Hesse convey this message. The tragic apotheosis of confused little Boris, who shoots himself with the gun owned by his own suicidal grandfather, must reflect the author's continued sinister conception of the universe. Life plays a trick on us, and acceptance of this reality is not at all easy, or perhaps ultimately deemed possible. The irony of a cruel fate permeates Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, despite whatever suggestion of a salutary philosophy of life. The initially ennobled state of 'fatherlessness' is invalidated by Bernard's return to his previously rejected father. Strouvilhou, as the propagator of a Nietzschean-style categorization of society between masters and slaves, has very little authorial power. His status as spokesman is invalidated by his crucial role in the shooting of little Boris. The open ending of the novel, in which section the narrator and protagonist expresses his interest in yet another young protagonist, is hardly convincing as a resolution after the narrator's depiction of so many tragic personalities and equally as many disillusions. Irony, more than whatever elevated theory about life, permeates the novel and transforms it into a deceptive text of uncertain messages and ambiguous positions.

Even Hesse's novel is less unequivocally developed as a first reading might suggest. The Nietzschean Goldmund may have lived a full life, yet his death is far less ennobled as it is accompanied by strong feelings of frustration and confusion. Though Narziß' devout negation of the world of the senses may be seriously questioned, his inferiority vis-à-vis the restless Goldmund eventually remains much less certain. However superior the world of the senses, or a convergence between the senses and the spiritual, may be to that of the purely spiritual, the first fails to provide Goldmund with the innermost quietude one might have expected, and initially been led to believe in, after such an arduous quest. The novel's moral is a far less lucidly conveyed message than that of a simple philosophy of self-acceptance. Ultimately, both protagonists stand alone, and the final words of wisdom cannot but evoke a picture of all-consuming feelings of solitude and doubt about the possibility of any resolution whatsoever. The final image, and in fact the last word, of Hesse's novel, as if to indicate the lack of a comfortable resolution, is that of fire burning:

> Und nun schlug der Kranke nochmals die Augen auf und blickte lang in seines Freundes Gesicht. Mit den Augen nahm er Abschied von ihm. Und mit einer Bewegung, als versuche er den Kopf zu schütteln, flüsterte er:

> „Aber wie willst du sterben, Narziß, wenn du doch keine Mutter hast? Ohne Mutter kann man nicht lieben. Ohne Mutter kann man nicht sterben (...)" (...) Die beiden letzten Tage saß Narziß an seinem Bett, Tag und Nacht, und sah zu, wie er erlosch. Goldmunds letzte Worte brannten in seinem Herzen wie Feuer" (417).

The Nietzschean trace

Should one wish, in an attempt to push the analysis to its limits, to point out the Nietzschean traces in the *Faux-Monnayeurs* and *Narziß und Goldmund*, that is, as isolated points in the narrative, one could argue that the two novels do contain a set of points or themes that have a typically Nietzschean quality about them. And this, it should be acknowledged, beyond the specific ways in which the authors have treated them. Though these points may have been used in some way or other before, even prior to Nietzsche, I will hold that the definition he attributes to them are specific enough to be called original, and that they are specific enough to be recognized in a certain work that makes use of them.

In Nietzsche, for instance, we find the unconditional love of human beings for their human existence, and this not despite, but because of the suffering that is involved in it. For Nietzsche, human beings must *want*, and in fact must want nothing more fervently than, the suffering in their lives. Though suffering has forever been a topic of literary interest, the so explicitly promulgated love for one's own suffering without the prospect of a transcendent referent is rather original. It seems to me that especially Hesse has elaborated on this theme in his novel. Suffering is also related to artistic experience, and indeed in both Hesse and Nietzsche it constitutes the prerequisite of true art.

A second trace, in my opinion, is the specifically philosophical treatment of the child, something one can observe in both novels, and something that goes back to Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. The *Übermensch* is in Nietzsche also the child. The child is no longer revered because of its innocence, which would be a Romantic trait, but precisely perhaps because of its lack thereof: the child is characterized by traits such as a strong sense of freedom and independence and a strong desire to break away from its social environment. In Gide, especially, the innocence of the child-like protagonist has come to reside in its lack of innocence as it is traditionally conceived. That is, innocence lies in its street-wise defiance of authority, and in its strong desire to experience the profane world of the senses.

Also present in the novels is the portrayal of pity and compassion as feelings that obstruct and damage life rather than stimulate and protect it. In Nietzsche, one of the more original interpretations of pity and compassion towards one's neighbour is that he defines these so-called qualities as an expression of power, and ultimately also as a clear sign of one's own hatred of life. Both Gide and Hesse explicitly question the salutary effects of pity and compassion as these have traditionally been conceived.

And finally, there is a strong sense of individualism, that is, a strong individual who rejects society because this individual wills it, that binds the three thinkers, a type of individualism which, in my opinion, is definitely more Nietzschean than Romantic.

Yet, as previously indicated, the trace cannot be anything more than a trace. The isolated points in the narrative may exist, yet they do not exist outside of the larger narrative configuration, which in fact consists of a plurality of points and themes. Like the atom itself, the traces are not stable entities onto themselves --in fact, the traces must inevitably change in status according to whatever configuration that holds them. Thus, there is no Nietzschean message in the two novels. In fact, the more one attempts to isolate the thematic trace just by itself, the more one seems to be stuck with a distortion of the narrative as a whole. In more concrete terms: the difference between the three thinkers can be seen especially, in my opinion, in the difference of degree. If the unconditional love for existence as it is, as a thematic trace, may be present in the novels, this trace cannot exist apart from the protagonist who personifies this very quality. And I would argue that the protagonists in both novels constantly challenge this philosophical trace, to the extent that their behaviour and predicament propose the negation rather than the affirmation of the philosophical truth they are supposed to predicate. Irony inevitably slips in, that is, perhaps despite the authors themselves. And attempting to fit a theoretical paradigm into a human being must change the paradigm itself.

Thus, unconditional and earthly love may still be promulgated, yet now much more tentatively, modestly, even with a grain of irony. Both the *Faux-Monnayeurs* and *Narziß und Goldmund* lack the resolving tone of the Zarathustrian or Nietzschean message. And both lack the conviction with which the prophet and philosopher make their statement. If in Nietzsche the contradiction often finds expression in the quick jump aside, in the impulsive move as if to elude an obstacle, in the statement and its negation expressed in one and the same breath, self-contradiction in the *Faux-Monnayeurs* and *Narziß und Goldmund* seems much more structural. It is much more part of its ideological structure.

The 'quick fix' self-contradiction in Nietzsche gives way to a sense of impasse in Gide and Hesse. Both works exude the smell of nihilism without the comfort of a resolution.[19]

Thus pity and compassion are much less easily rejected once these negative qualities are poured into the mould of real-life protagonists. And individualism with Gide and Hesse is emphasized insofar as it concerns the freedom and exploration of the self. In Nietzsche, individualism is the inevitable, deep, self-inflicted, and yet sheer untenable loneliness of an impersonal 'prototyped' individual, and it is the rather cold and elitist attempt to distinguish oneself from the crowd. In both *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* and *Narziß und Goldmund*, philosophy is ruled by the imperative of the personal: it must inevitably yield to eroticism, that is, to the erotic gaze of the narrator.

The Nietzschean youngster may be celebrated with a strong passion, yet this is done first and foremost because of the youngster's beauty and style on an aesthetic level, rather than philosophical. The young Nietzschean protagonists in the novels operate under the imperative of a homo-erotic desire rather than that of whatever philosophical necessity. Olivier, Bernard, Caloub, the majority of the young and male protagonists in the *Faux-Monnayeurs* appear as part of this intricate construct that is ruled by desire, no matter how Nietzschean some of their traits may be. Edouard, as their more than compassionate mentor, is an intricate part of their performance and role in the novel. They do not exist without him. These protagonists may be said to comply to a certain Nietzschean philosophical model or message, yet they do so only insofar as the gaze of both mentor and narrator is satisfied.

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[19] Nietzsche is explicitly mentioned in *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*. Edouard, the novel's 'writer-protagonist,' for instance, speaks of Nietzsche's „formidable érosion des contours" to characterize his new conception of the novel (which, it should be added, encompasses a rather liberal application of this Nietzschean premise in the field of literary theory). In this respect, it should be noted that the relation between the narrator and Edouard is not at all a resolved matter: it remains uncertain whether any, and if so, which one of the two functions as Gide's spokesman. Gide's novel has the complex structure of a reflection of a reflection ('mise en abyme'). Edouard writes a novel called *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, yet Edouard, himself, is a protagonist of a story invented by the narrator. He in turn is invented, and figures in a novel, entitled *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, by Gide. A complex play of perspectives and textual authorities emerges: the narrator, for instance, says about his own fictional character: „Ce qui ne me plaît pas chez Edouard, ce sont les raisons qu'il se donne. Pourquoi cherche-t-il à se persuader, à présent, qu'il conspire au bien de Boris? Mentir aux autres, passe encore, mais à soi-même!" (216). Even more interesting is the fact that Edouard's actions take place under the imperative of his friendship with Bernard. While elaborating on his newly developed theory of the novel, however Nietzschean one may choose to define this, the narrator more than once states of Edouard that he wishes to impress Bernard: „(...) L'estime de Bernard lui importait extrêmement. Etait-ce pour la conquérir qu'Edouard, aussitôt devant lui, laissait son Pégase piaffer? Le meilleur moyen pour la perdre. Edouard le sentait bien; il se le disait et se le répétait; mais en dépit de toute résolution, sitôt devant Bernard, il agissait tout autrement qu'il eût voulu, et parlait d'une manière qu'il jugeait tout aussitôt absurde (et qui l'était en vérité). A quoi l'on aurait pu penser qu'il l'aimait? (...) Mais non; je ne crois pas. (...)" (182-3). The 'je' of the last sentence is the narrator speaking, and the narrator remarks that he is unsure whether Edouard loves (in which sense exactly is unclear) Bernard. Gide's novel may be an expression of Edouard's theory of a 'liberated' type of novel, yet one cannot be certain of whether (nor of the degree in which) this is the case. The parody, which implies the promulgation of this 'liberated' novel, may be a parody of the parody. Ultimately, Gide's novel is also a novel (a typically Gidean novel no doubt), however revolutionary Edouard may define his own.

Goldmund, too, appears in the novel under the imperative of his mentor's gaze. While urging Goldmund to obey his 'motherly' and sensitive nature, Narziß reveals to him the difference between the mind- and the soul-oriented, the world of the father and that of the mother, between Goldmund and himself:

> Die Naturen von deiner Art, die mit den starken und zarten Sinnen, die Beseelten, die Träumer, Dichter, Liebenden, sind uns andern, uns Geistmenschen, beinahe immer überlegen. Eure Herkunft ist eine mütterliche. Ihr lebet im Vollen, euch ist die Kraft der Liebe und des Erlebenkönnens gegeben. Wir Geistigen (...) leben nicht im Vollen, wir leben in der Dürren. (...) Mir scheint die Sonne, dir scheinen Mond und Sterne, deine Träume sind von Mädchen, meine von Knaben (63-4).

Yet, the revelation is also a confession: Narziß, all too casually, confesses to "[have dreams] of boys." Narziß' philosophical theorizing may be convincing, yet the final insertion somehow puts the theory into a different perspective. Goldmund operates, and, as it turns out, has operated throughout the entire narrative, as the object of his mentor's gaze.[20]

To conclude, we may argue that this special type of 'mentor meets pupil' construct is an important characteristic of literary modernism. In fact, this construct is so prevalent, that one could speak of a current. Ziolkowski, as we have seen, may refer to the genre of the *Bildungsroman* in this respect, yet I would argue that the construct has a different, more daring and definitely darker dimension in literary modernism. Eroticism slips in, as does an awareness of the more intricate and potentially destructive qualities that are inherent in this relationship. We have seen that both Gide and Hesse exude this new and darker sensibility, as have writers like Thomas Mann and Oscar Wilde. Mann's *Death in Venice*, in my opinion, is a perfect expression of this new sensibility. The protagonist, Gustav Aschenbach, no less than whatever mentor in Gide and Hesse, finds his pupil. And here too, theory must yield to desire, philosophy to aesthetics. We should remind ourselves of the fact that Aschenbach never actually speaks to his mythologized pupil, Tadzio.

And thus the construct, among other elements, must give way to a very personal type of literature. In his sparkling short story, "*Pierre Menard, Author of the* Quixote," Jorge Borges, as narrator of the story, speaks of his friend's decision to "have taken on the mysterious duty of reconstructing literally [Cervantes'] spontaneous work."[21] About the *Quixote*, the narrator says:

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[20] It is interesting to see that the friendship's erotic dimension has been confirmed by the author. See footnote: 16.
[21] Quotes are taken from *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Wri*tings (New York: Modern Library), p. 36-44.

> Cervantes' text and Menard's are verbally identical, but the second is almost infinitely richer. (More ambiguous, his detractors will say, but ambiguity is richness.) It is a revelation to compare Menard's Don Quixote with Cervantes'. The latter, for example, wrote (part one, chapter nine):
>
> (...) truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counsellor.
>
> Written in the seventeenth century, written by the „lay genius" Cervantes, this enumeration is a mere rhetorical praise of history. Menard, on the other hand, writes:
>
> (...) truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counsellor (43).

The idea is clear: though the words are identical, reception of those very words will differ according to the period in which they have been conceived and received. Borges' parody --of literary criticism, to be sure-- has a serious undertone: the very same words or message will change according to the one who expresses it, no matter how identical these words or message may initially have been intended to be. About Menard's "technique" of original duplication, the narrator ironically adds:

> Menard (perhaps without wanting to) has enriched, by means of a technique, the halting and rudimentary art of reading: this new technique is that of the deliberate anachronism and the erroneous attribution. This technique, whose applications are infinite, prompts us to go through the *Odyssey* as if it were posterior to the *Aneid*. (...) This technique fills the most placid works with adventure. To attribute the *Imitatio Christi* to Louis Ferdinand Céline or to James Joyce, is this not a sufficient renovation of its tenuous spiritual indications? (44)

In this chapter, I can be said to have dealt with literature, instead of philosophy. Too many books and articles on Nietzschean influence in a work of literature deal with philosophy: a Nietzschean trace is carefully isolated, influence is established (also on the basis of explicit statements by the authors), the question of Nietzsche's influence resolved. I have attempted to demonstrate that it is the art of fiction, precisely because it cannot provide an unambiguous message, which must challenge the philosophical premise on which it is said to be predicated. That this defiance of an unambiguous philosophical message may happen despite the authors themselves, does not invalidate this argument.

In this chapter, I can also be said to have dealt with the image of the child. Though reminiscent of a Nietzschean model, the child --we can be honest now-- has become the young adolescent male in both Gide and Hesse. It is interesting to see in which ways this image, as the alter ego of Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, is developed in later interpretations of Nietzsche. There, the child increasingly functions as the symbol of the *Übermensch*'s ability, on a philosophical level, to transcend its own metaphysical limitations.

CHAPTER FIVE

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE AND MILAN KUNDERA: A POLYPHONOUS VOICE

„Si je suis partisan d'une forte présence du penser dans un roman cela ne veut pas dire que j'aime ce qu'on appelle le 'roman philosophique', cet avertissement du roman à une philosophie, cette 'mise en récit' des idées morales ou politiques. La pensée authentiquement romanesque (...) est toujours asystématique; indisciplinée; elle est proche de celle de Nietzsche; elle est expérimentale (...)." Milan Kundera[1]

Kundera and the esthetics of the novel

In picking up the argument of the previous chapter, we can establish that with Milan Kundera the intricate question of philosophy, literature and influence seems closer to its resolution, even though the answer to this question entails one of ambiguity and irony. In a sense, we can state that Kundera confirms our suspicions that ideology and literature are two entities that do not go well together. The previous chapter has demonstrated that incorporating a philosophical or ideological message into a work of literature must inevitably change the content of the message, or make the conviction with which the message is conveyed less strong. We have seen that with Gide, for instance, a certain degree of irony, no matter how subtly this irony is expressed, subverts the argumentative power of his very own *Faux-Monnayeurs*, that is, if one takes the argument to reside in its expression of a Nietzschean, ideological message. And with Hesse, too, it can be said that Goldmund's peregrinations are ruled by the erotic and esthetic gaze of his mentor rather than by a Nietzschean imperative. It seems to be the rule that philosophy is transformed whenever it is incorporated within the personal experience of the author, or whenever it is subjected to a very personal set of esthetic values.

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[1] From *Les testaments trahis*, p. 206.

In this chapter, I will be speaking about Nietzsche and Kundera. A justification for a comparison between the two thinkers, in my opinion, is easily established. Kundera's more recent work on the genre of the novel, entitled *Les testaments trahis*[2], for instance, contains many a reference to Nietzsche. Kundera does not refrain from passing judgement on what he calls distorsions of Nietzsche's thought. He thus also implicitly indicates to have a more accurate view himself: "Les historiens ou les professeurs en exposant la philosophie nietzschéenne non seulement la réduisent, ce qui va de soi, mais la défigurent en la retournant en l'opposé de ce qu'elle est, à savoir un système" (208).

His famous novel, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*[3], is another incentive to conduct a more thorough investigation of Nietzsche's status in Kundera's oeuvre. To a certain extent, it is a dialogue with Nietzsche's enigmatic theory of eternal recurrence. The very first passage of the book is an explicit reference to Nietzsche and this theory, and, as such, sets the parameters of how the story unfolds.

Before proceeding with a more comprehensive analysis that focuses on the specific treatment of these references to Nietzsche, however, I intend to start off with some of the methodological premises that underlie my own investigation into the literary incorporation of a philosopher's thought. These premises largely follow Kundera's, who never ceases to emphasize the ironic quality of the novel as genre.

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[2] Paris: Gallimard, 1993.

[3] Quotations are taken from the French version, entitled: *L'insoutenable légèreté de l'être*. Paris: Gallimard, 1989.

On irony and ambiguity, the lack of authorial guidance and the indeterminacy of the child as philosophical concept

In book of essays entitled *Les testaments trahis*, Kundera speaks of the way in which literary criticism has tended to mythologize an author such as Franz Kafka by focusing on the author's personal life rather than on his texts. Kundera designates this phenomenon by the pejorative term "la kafkologie," which is a type of interpretation that attempts to explain his literary oeuvre primarily by making use of events that happened during the author's life. Biographical information is used to render the text comprehensible exactly in those instances where the text lacks clarity. The explanations thus provided for the author's writing of his text are like the metaphysical pillars that ground the text as a construct. Criticism becomes an ontology, or, in Kafka's case, a "kafkology," in that the essence of the text is made to reside in the author's personal experience.

> (...) la kafkalogie examine les livres de Kafka non pas dans le *grand contexte* de l'histoire littéraire (...), mais presque exclusivement dans le *microcontexte biographique*. (...) La biographie est la clé principale pour la compréhension du sens de l'oeuvre. Pis: le seul sens de l'oeuvre est d'être une clé pour comprendre la biographie (57) (italics are Kundera's).

Thus, Kafka's *Die Verwandlung*, for instance, is explained by this "kafkalogi[cal]" type of interpretation in terms of the oppressive authority of the father in Kafka's real life, rather than as a fictional text in and by itself (an at least partial consequence of Max Brod's decision to publish his friend's all too renowned letter to his father[4]). And novels such as *Der Prozeß* and *Das Schloß* appear, for instance, as political metaphores symbolizing the suppression of an individual member of a Jewish minority within a larger, bureaucracy-ridden society. At times his oeuvre as a whole, because of the seemingly life-denying quality of its contents, is explained in terms of a religious quest for salvation. In all cases, Kundera argues, Kafka's 'testament' is 'betrayed': no room is left for the author's sense of irony and self-irony, and no subversive quality of his laughter, that is, a laughter that undermines the very attempt at providing a decisive interpretation, can appear.

Most interpretations of Kafka do not take into account the esthetic considerations with regard to his writing. Kundera argues that Kafka has no other intention than to explore the intricate depths of human existence --no other desire than to refrain from defining and explaining this condition in terms of an all-encompassing theory, be it psychoanalytic, political or economic. In the end, all that remains are questions, that is, questions that are constantly raised, yet remain without an answer, not as a sign of the author's incompetence, but as a true manifestation of life itself. Questions appear in poetic formulations as if to indicate the beauty of the question, rather than that of its possible answer. Humour is distinctly present in his works, yet instead of envisioning a sense of relief or the shimmering awareness of an alternative truth, it appears as something which is just simply inherent in all our lives. Kafka's protagonists are ultimately ruled by a set of irrational drives that explain their behaviour in an unsatisfactory manner only. Kafka can be said to simply describe things the way they are beyond the answering of the question of why this is the case. About the range of writers among whom Kafka is also said to figure, Kundera states:

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[4] About Brod's 'betrayal' of his friend's final request, Kundera is quite decisive: „Je ne crois pas qu'en demandant à Brod de détruire sa correspondance Kafka craignait sa publication. Une telle idée ne pouvait guère lui venir à l'esprit. Les éditeurs ne s'intéressaient pas à ses romans, comment auraient-ils pu s'intéresser à ses lettres? Ce qui l'a poussé à vouloir les détruire c'était la honte, la honte tout élementaire, non pas celle d'un écrivain mais celle d'un simple individu, la honte de laisser traîner des choses intimes sous les yeux des autres, de la famille, des inconnus, la honte d'être tourné en objet, la honte capable de „lui survivre". (...) Et pourtant, ces lettres Brod les a rendues publiques; auparavant, dans son propre testament, il avait demandé à Kafka d'"anéantir certaines choses"; or, lui-même il publie *tout*, sans discernement; même cette longue et pénible lettre trouvée dans un tiroir, lettre que Kafka ne s'était jamais décidé à envoyer à son père et que, grâce à Brod, n'importe qui a pu lire ensuite, sauf son destinataire. L'indiscrétion de Brod ne trouve à mes yeux aucune excuse. Il a trahi son ami. Il a agi contre sa volonté, contre le sens et l'esprit de sa volonté, contre sa nature pudique qu'il connaissait" (*Les testaments trahis*, p 307).

> Les plus grands romanciers de la période post-proustienne (...) ont été extrêmement sensibles à l'esthétique du roman (...): ils ont intégré la réflexion essayistique à l'art du roman; ils ont rendu plus libre la composition; reconquis le droit à la digression; insufflé au roman l'esprit du non-sérieux et du jeu; renoncé aux dogmes du réalisme psychologique en créant des personnages sans prétendre concurrencer (...) l'état civil; et surtout: ils se sont opposés à l'obligation de suggérer au lecteur l'illusion du réel (...) (93). (...) [L]e romancier ne se déguise pas en savant, en médecin, en sociologue, en historiographe, il analyse des *situations humaines* qui ne font partie d'aucune discipline scientifique, qui font tout simplement partie de la vie (195) (italics are Kundera's).

Kundera thus argues that the esthetics of the novel are ruled by the imperatives of irony and ambiguity, and that these qualities appear as a true expression of the human condition and of life. Ultimately human beings do not know who or what they are, nor why or how they behave the way they do. The fictional prose as novel is nothing less, in a sense, than this expression of the very complexity of life. The novel describes and does not judge. It problematizes a question rather than resolve it. It proposes a plurality of truths and perspectives, instead of just a single one. The crucial point in Kundera's allegation of Brod's betrayal of his friend's last wishes is not so much the breach of loyalty involved in the publishing of Kafka's *Nachlaß*, which after all remains a matter of controversy, but the fact that Brod failed to respect Kafka's esthetic will and aspirations to shape his own oeuvre. Kafka's esthetic presence is that which he attempted to create solely in and by his published works, and, in Kundera's view, this presence must have been one of (compassionate) irony. The key to his oeuvre is the realization that his work needs no key to be understood --the esthetic formulation of questions is all there is. Thus allegory, symbols and hidden meanings, which all are interpretive keys that suggest that essence and meaning reside in a text behind the text itself, are not necessarily present in his work. Nor, as Kundera argues, are they present in any other good novel comparable to Kafka's. About the specific 'nature' of the genre of the novel, Kundera states:

> Il y a une différence d'essence entre, d'un côté, le roman, et, de l'autre, les Mémoires, la biographie. La valeur d'une biographie consiste dans la nouveauté et l'exactitude des faits réels révélés. La valeur d'un roman, dans la révélation des possibilités jusqu'alors occultées de l'existence en tant que telle; autrement dit, le roman découvre ce qui est caché en chacun de nous. (...) (307). (...) L'ironie [du roman] veut dire: aucune des affirmations qu'on trouve dans un roman ne peut être prise isolément, chacune d'elles se trouve dans une confrontation complexe et contradictoire avec d'autres affirmations, d'autres situations, d'autres gestes, d'autres idées, d'autres événements. Seule une lecture lente, deux fois, plusieurs fois répétée,

> fera ressortir tous les *rapports ironiques* à l'intérieur du roman sans lesquels le roman restera incompris (237) (italics are Kundera's).

For our analysis of a Nietzschean influence on Kundera as novelist, we can establish now that the parameters within which the critic must operate are clearly defined. And this, one should add, by Kundera himself. If the novel's "value" particularly resides in the author's "unveiling of possibilities of [our human] existence that were previously unknown," that is, beyond the question of personal judgement, then a Nietzschean premise or truth can never be said to be the basis of Kundera's oeuvre. As we have seen in the previous chapter, irony subverts the ideological argument and content of a work of literature. Kundera's argument is precisely that he has no single, univocal or consistent line of thought. The novel is no philosophical system, although in Kundera's view, it will always have a philosophical dimension. Defining Kundera's treatment of the child, which theme has a prominent place in his work (no less than with Gide and Hesse, for instance) in terms of the Nietzschean or Zarathustrian infant is a doubtful activity, no matter how intricately linked these concepts and their philosophical qualification may appear to be. Even more so than with Gide and Hesse, the authority of the concept in Kundera's work faces its own disintegration.

When Tamina in *Le livre du rire et de l'oubli*[5] is taken to a mysterious island by a mysterious stranger, the boatsman is a friendly young boy and the island itself a place full of young children. The child must stand for the joy and the need to forget, an ability which Tamina has lost and which, so it seems, she needs to re-acquire in order to survive. Though Tamina's loyalty to her deceased husband is without boundaries, it is clear that the memories she is trying to re-capture and eternalize in her head prevent her from leading a normal life. No longer can she enjoy the simplicity of a daily routine or the ordinary people she meets at work. Her husband has become an obsession for her, and the need to forget seems more humane than the rigorous allegiance to somebody who is no longer there. Isn't Kundera's novel called "the book of laughter and forgetting"?

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[5] *Le livre du rire et de l'oubli*. Paris: Gallimard, 1985 (Traduit du tchèque par François *Kérel* *(Kniha smichu a zapomnění,* 1978). Nouvelle édition revue par l'auteur). I have used the French edition for several reasons: French can be considered the author's second language, after the

Yet, the issue as such is far from resolved, even though the interpretation, from an ideological perspective, is consistent enough. The child as philosophical concept in Kundera's work is an ambiguous notion --it has both positive and negative connotations. The young adolescent who takes Tamina --one of Kundera's favourite protagonists-- in his boat to her island of oblivion may smile and be at peace with himself, yet the image of self-absorbed sensuality that goes with the boy is downright grotesque --the dance he makes is not the Zarathustrian dance of spiritual freedom from metaphysical needs, but a dance that is reminiscent of masturbation and premature sex:

> [Le gamin] (...) regarda Tamina ramer et sortit un petit magnétophone qui était rangé sous son banc. Une musique rock se fit entendre, des guitares électriques, des paroles, et le garçon commença à se tortiller en mesure. Tamina le regardait avec répugnance: cet enfant se

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Czech. Kundera has lived in France since 1975. The 1985 edition in French is revised by the author himself.

> déhanchait avec des mouvements coquets d'adulte qu'elle trouvait obscènes (241).

Just as the boy's ambivalent dance cannot reveal the author's message, the strange community of children on the island without adults is difficult to resolve in terms of a logical explanation. True, the child may stand for freedom, yet the cold indifference with which it operates in the novel makes the philosophical authority and value of the child questionable. During Tamina's final struggle with death and the water, the children just stand aside, watching their former companion drown with a detached sense of interest and curiosity (an inexplicable paradox?):

> Les enfants ne faisaient pas un geste, personne ne lui tendait une rame ou la main, personne ne voulait la sauver. Ils ne faisaient que la regarder de leurs yeux écarquillés et avides, ils l'observaient. Un gamin, avec une rame pour gouvernail, maintenait la barque au plus près. Elle avala de nouveau de l'eau dans ses poumons, toussa, agita les bras, sentant qu'elle ne pouvait plus tenir à la surface. Ses jambes pesaient de plus en plus lourd. Elles l'entraînaient vers le fond comme un poids. Sa tête s'enfonçait sous l'eau. Elle fit des mouvements violents et réussit plusieurs fois à remonter; à chaque fois elle voyait la barque et les yeux enfantins qui l'observaient. Puis elle disparut sous la surface (271-2) (Kundera's paragraphing not respected).

The child in Kundera's fictional universe as a philosophical concept is ambiguous, and it would take us too far afield here to analyze in detail this concept and the various places in which it emerges in detail. What one should establish, however, is that though the child may be reminiscent of a Nietzschean type of innocence, that is, the child is situated beyond the realm of good and evil in a world that is rigorously its own, it is not at all clear to what extent this is actually an ideal to which the author aspires. In fact, I would argue that a rather negative image of the child prevails over any positive qualifications. The narrative section on Tamina and the 'colony of kids,' which as a literary image is reminiscent of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, covers some thirty pages in the French edition, and it is occasionally interrupted by the narrator's memories of his father and the city of Prague. The status of the short narrative in the larger configuration is not too clear, even though the narrator has previously stated that the novel itself is "(...) un roman sur Tamina et, à l'instant où Tamina sort de la scène, c'est un roman pour Tamina. Elle est le principal personnage et le principal auditeur et toutes les autres histoires sont une variation sur sa propre histoire et se rejoignent dans sa vie comme dans un miroir" (237).

Tamina should be considered, then, as a key protagonist of the novel, though, once again, Kundera insists that no key should exist in the sense of a key that 'cracks' an ideological code; the usefulness of her experience on the island is far from obvious. Tamina's experience is a dream, a nightmare, a mental process in Tamina's head, and a testimony to the current instability of her psychological condition. Tamina seeks freedom from the oppressive influence of the haunting memories of her deceased husband, and, yet, it is also true that she simply cannot be free.

A reason for this refusal in the traditional sense may very well be absent or irretrievable: as Kundera's narrator in *L'immortalité* argues himself, a "ground" as in the German noun *Grund* and implying something 'deep down inside' that motivates action may be there, yet a reason in terms of a logical explanation, not necessarily.[6] In fact, the narrator's insertions fuse with Tamina's experience in a message beyond one that is ruled by system and logic. Tamina's loyalty to her husband is like the narrator's loyalty to his very own father --the children with whom he has her play, intricately linked with the very children the songs of which he witnesses at his father's death. The narrator tells us in *Le livre du rire et de l'oubli* (are "laughter" and "forgetting" not the two qualities that distinguish a child from its parent?) that he closes the window of the room in which he spends the final days with his father so as to prevent himself from hearing the childrens' "childish voices" cheer (is it because they celebrate the glories of the oppressive, communist regime or because of the fact that they negate his father's death?). To protect his father from hearing them. About the indefinite character of his own motivations to write, and that of his stance in this particular section, the narrator argues:

> Pourquoi Tamina est-elle sur l'île des enfants? Pourquoi est-ce justement là que je l'imagine? Je ne sais pas. Peut-être parce que le jour où mon père agonisait, l'air était plein de joyeuses chansons chantées par des voix enfantines?

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[6] In the novel entitled *L'immortalité*, the narrator argues: „(...) tout au fond de chacun de nous se trouve, en tant que cause de ses actes, ce que les Allemands appellent Grund, un fondement; un code qui contient l'essence de notre destin" (p. 301). Kundera replaces this 'ground' by a metaphore to describe what motivates action, that is, an image that explains why one commits a certain act beyond conventional reason and logic.

The reasons behind the almost cynical description of the child as a philosophical tool may be political at first sight, yet a better acquaintance with Kundera and his work teaches us that the criticism goes deeper than that. Kundera seems to be opposed to the tendency to elevate a child-like mentality onto the level of adult human beings, be they members of a West-, Central- or East-European society. At stake is the image of the child, that is, its alleged qualities of innocence, capriciousness, seriousness and charm, and the need of adult members to somehow adopt and believe in this image. The image is in fact carefully construed to deceive others and the self. The child and its ideals in Kundera's work seem to stand, at least in part, for the lack of irony and self-irony, that is, for the lack of a compassionate and intelligent laughter about the all too serious matters of life and the self. In short, for the lack of a sense of honesty. In his collection of essays entitled *L'art du roman*, Kundera speaks of --what he terms-- the current state of "infantocracy" in today's society, by which he means an ideology of progress ruled by the 'mythology' of the child:

> INFANTOCRATIE. „Un motocycliste fonçait dans la rue vide, bras et jambes en O, et remontait la perspective dans un bruit de tonnerre; son visage reflétait le sérieux d'un enfant qui donne à ses hurlements la plus grande importance“ (Musil dans *L'Homme sans qualités*). Le sérieux d'un enfant: le visage de l'Âge technique. L'infantocratie: l'idéal de l'enfance imposé à l'humanité“ (162).

At this point it seems safe to argue that one of the main drives behind Kundera's oeuvre is this attempt to obtain a total lucidity about the essence of life, that is, life as it is deprived of all self-deception, and about the role that human beings play in it. Tamina in the *Livre du rire et de l'oubli* should laugh as a child, for the simple reason that if she does not she will perish. And yet, she cannot. Tamina remains incapable of making thoughts and awareness disappear. It is ironic perhaps that a sense of resolution is found in her death only, this ultimate "royaume de l'insignifiance" (259), as if to indicate that death is the only solution in a life fraught with painful meaning. This meaning is painful precisely because of the absence of meaning as it is found in the child's world. And much like Tamina, Agnès in *L'immortalité* chooses to be aware of life as it is, that is, of her life stripped of self-deception.

Yet, she ultimately can be said to choose death as a realm in which the highest degree of lucidity and self-awareness meets with the lowest degree of pain. Though a quick resolution in this context may be inappropriate, and definitely as it appears in the introduction of an analysis of an author as complex as Kundera, one could argue that Kundera is exploring the child as a metaphysical concept himself. He seems to investigate the highest degree of lucidity human beings can possibly obtain, which is an awareness, however, to be perceived in such a degree that it must refrain from destroying life. The child must stand for the loss of self-awareness, either by the taking on of empty meaning or by the transcendence of meaning altogether. Yet, it remains a question of the extent to which human beings are actually capable of living their lives without being painfully aware of their own condition and of themselves. Human beings may want the pain that their lucidity brings.[7] It seems to me that at the basis of Kundera's work and thought stand these two parts of a sheer unsolvable problem: the highest degree of irony combined with the ordinary joy of human beings to lead their lives, and thus also inevitably deceive themselves.

Yet, as previously indicated, there are no guarantees as to the author's proposed resolution. The ideal of the child as a tendency to dissolve and counteract the painful awareness of life as it is, which is an attitude towards life which may entail a certain freedom from metaphysics, is neither proclaimed nor rejected --it is merely described. Tamina's salvation may lie in the 'wisdom' of the child to laugh and to forget (an attitude of transcending meaning by creating it is adopted, for instance, by the playful character of Avenarius in the novel entitled *L'immortalité*[8]), yet ultimately, for whichever reasons, she refuses to accomplish both. And it is this ideological void or impasse, in which neither Tamina nor Avenarius are held to represent the author's ideal conception of how life should be approached, which should be the starting point of my analysis on Nietzsche and Kundera. In it, I will refrain from speaking of a Nietzschean message proper: Kundera's proclaimed sense of irony and ambiguity invalidates a message in the traditional sense of the word. Yet, that which remains in terms of a comparison, in my opinion, is potentially even more interesting: rather than focusing on influence, I will approach these thinkers by referring to a dialogue that can be said to exist between them. Something to the extent of a polyphonous sound of two different, though similarly attuned, voices. Nietzsche and Kundera can be said to share an important set of common concerns. As in the previous chapter, I will focus on explicit statements on Nietzsche, yet the difference in this analysis is that these statements appear in the works of literature rather than in specific interviews or essays. The explicit treatment of a number of Nietzsche's concepts in the novels themselves produces an interesting set of dynamics.

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[7] Interesting, in this context, is the fact that Nietzsche defines self-inflicted pain as cruelty towards others turned into cruelty towards the self.

[8] About Avenarius, the narrator states: „Et soudain, je compris Avenarius: si nous refusons d'accorder de l'importance à un monde qui se croit important, et si nous ne trouvons en ce monde aucun écho à notre rire, il ne nous reste qu'une solution: prendre le monde en bloc et en faire un

This analysis can thus be said to have reached a certain maturity in the treatment of converging thoughts. Kundera is no 'Nietzschean' writer, nor do we feel the need to turn him into one. Kundera's work entails an intriguing set of issues, some of which can be said to relate to Nietzsche. Yet, it also contains issues that can be said to relate, with a same degree of legitimacy, to the poststructuralist school of thought. Kundera, in my opinion, is an accurate observer of today's society, and in some of these instances he reminds me of a Jean Baudrillard or a Roland Barthes.[9] And in some of the more psychological episodes in his work seems to resonate the voice of a Jean-Paul Sartre.[10] Yet, in this case too, as far as the methodology is concerned, it would be close to

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objet pour notre jeu; en faire un jouet. Avenarius joue et le jeu est la seule chose qui lui importe dans un monde sans importance (411)."

[9] It would be interesting, for instance, to analyze Kundera's concept of *Kitsch* in relation to Baudrillard's concept of the *Simulacrum* or the hyper-real.

[10] The section entitled „Les lunettes noires," for instance, reminds one of Sartre's play *Huis Clos*, both in form and in content (it is a scene in which Paul, Agnès and Laura play out this psychological drama). The narrator emphasizes the 'physicality' of the positions taken by the different 'actors' on 'stage.' Agnès' incapacity to neutralize the all-pervading awareness of her own body has another, quite distinctly, Sartrian echo.

impossible to disentangle and extract origin from the large number of similarly disposed thinkers that have influenced Kundera.

An important additional focus in this particular chapter is that it deals with an example of postmodern literature. Though it would be premature at this point to consider Kundera as a typical writer of a postmodern formation, it will be interesting to observe to which extent a certain dialogue with Nietzsche has changed over the decades. The Nietzsche who proclaims the importance of a liberated sensuality beyond the traditional rigours of religion seems to give way to the more subtle sides of this philosopher. Skepticism seems more obvious. If in literary modernism a strong sense of lucidity about the essence of life can generally be said to generate a certain pride (and a necessary means in the struggle for freedom), this very sense of lucidity, in my opinion, has become rather oppressive in the case of a writer such as Kundera. Irony may be a necessary step in the dealing with life, yet too much of it will obstruct life. Kundera seems to argue that is difficult to find a resolution and a way out once a person is caught in the vortex of ironical investigation.

More generally, it will be interesting to see whether a postmodern type of literature can be said to follow a Nietzschean set of premises. The treatment of style and subject matter, such as extreme fragmentation and the indeterminate status of the subject as such, as well as the blurring of conventional genre distinctions, to name but a few of the many characteristics of postmodern fiction, are all somehow reminiscent of Nietzsche's skepticism towards language and representation in general. In this respect, it is indicative that Richard Rorty, in one of his more recent works of criticism, speaks of a "post-Nietzschean" type of philosophy, instead of the more conventional term 'postmodern.'[11] Rorty explicitly claims to have abandoned the idea of trying to unify the large body of contemporary literary and non-literary production under a common denominator as fluid as "postmodern."[12] The term "post-Nietzschean," in Rorty's view, would be more accurate, at least in the case of philosophy.

In this context, however, it should be noted that Kundera proposes a theory of the 'postmodern' novel himself, even though he does not use the label 'post-Nietzschean.' In fact, for Kundera the "post-Proustian" novel, as he terms it, is a continuation and development of a current that started with Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, and that roughly ended at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Where Rorty speaks of "post-Nietzschean," then, Kundera would possibly refer to "post-Proustian" or "post-Cervantes" (he would also say this because of his claim that the true novel has all the characteristics of a philosophical investigation). Whatever the different designations used by the different thinkers to characterize a period of production of thought, I intend to investigate the validity of a post-Nietzschean label for an author such as Kundera.

In the following, then, I will focus primarily on a set of common preoccupations that exists between Kundera and Nietzsche. I will speak of three different sections in relation to these preoccupations: an esthetic and ethical concern and a terminological affinity. In the second part of this chapter, I intend to indicate some of the differences. I will focus in more detail on the more recent works of Kundera, that is, on works that range from his novel entitled *L'immortalité* to one of his most recent ones, *La lenteur*.[13] Though Kundera is first and foremost a Czech writer, albeit with a much wider importance than a mere national one, I have chosen to concentrate on the works which have been written, revised or translated in French.

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[11] Richard Rorty: *Essays on Heidegger and others.* Philosophical Papers. volume 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

[12] Rorty states: „Heidegger and Derrida are often referred to as „postmodern" philosophers. I have sometimes used „postmodern" myself, in the rather narrow sense defined by Lyotard as „distrust of metanarratives." But I now wish that I had not. The term has been so over-used that it is causing more trouble than it is worth. I have given up on the attempt to find something common to Michael Graves's buildings, Pynchon's and Rushdie's novels, Ashberry's poems, various sorts of popular music, and the writings of Heidegger and Derrida" (1).

On descriptive metaphores, the 'ground' and the mole

In his novel entitled *L'immortalité*, Kundera speaks at some point of the remarkable way in which a certain young woman commits suicide. While sitting on the pavement of a busy road, with her hands covering her ears and her back facing the oncoming traffic, the woman in question patiently awaits the deadly impact of the first car that approaches her. And yet, the tragic irony in the case of this woman, and the narrator does not fail to point this out, is that instead of the cars crashing into her body, they manage to avoid her at the very last second, though not without hitting the trees which stand alongside the road. Many people die, though not the woman. She walks away unharmed and, in fact, as the narrator tells us, freed from the morosity and pain of her insular little world, as if awoken from a deep sleep by the shouts and screems of the very people she has turned into her victims.

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[13] By the time of writing this chapter, Kundera published his most recent novel, entitled: *L'identité*.

In an attempt to understand that which motivated the woman without name, the narrator tells us that a logical explanation cannot be easily provided. The way in which the woman chooses to commit suicide, which is a suicide that will cause the possible death of others, is a choice made beyond reason. Instead, the narrator uses a metaphor, that is, a poetic image that somehow makes her behaviour plausible, to characterize the woman. She thus becomes "[une fille qui] marche dans la vie comme dans une vallée; à chaque instant, elle croise quelqu'un et lui adresse la parole; mais les gens la regardent sans la comprendre et passent leur chemin, parce qu'elle s'exprime d'une voix si faible que personne ne l'entend" (301). For the narrator, the woman's seemingly irrational behaviour is clearly understandable as that of a girl to whom nobody listens, simply because the strength of her voice is too weak. Her incapacity to make herself known to the people around her causes the girl to retreat into herself even more, to the extent that for her no outside world can exist.

Similarly, the narrator truly understands his friend Avenarius, a character in this same novel, only when he succeeds in finding the appropriate metaphor to describe him. In the narrator's eyes, Avenarius is the lonely "child" that plays "avec le monde comme un enfant mélancolique qui n'a pas de frère" (411). Avenarius' refusal to prove his innocence in the case of unjust allegations of rape brought against him, somehow suddenly makes sense, yet only after his behaviour is explained in terms of the all too serious game of a child at play.

Kundera's argument that to understand a person and his or her behaviour one needs a poetic image instead of reason and logic is a powerful one, and we may have to proceed in a similar fashion in the case of these thinkers themselves. To characterize Nietzsche and Kundera, as well as the way in which a similar mind-set can be said to exist between them, one may have to have recourse to an image that somehow fits and explains their personalities, and this beyond the criterion of a logical and consistent description. In the preface to his book entitled *Morgenröthe*, Nietzsche uses the metaphor of the mole to describe that which motivated him to write the book. It is a remarkable passage in which Nietzsche explicitly poses the question of the reasons behind his very own searching, and a passage in which Nietzsche, much the same as Kundera, comes up with a poetic image to reveal the essence of his being:

> In diesem Buche findet man einen „Unterirdischen" an der Arbeit, einen Bohrenden, Grabenden, Untergrabenden. Man sieht ihn, vorausgesetzt, dass man Augen für solche Arbeit der Tiefe hat--, wie er langsam, besonnen, mit sanfter Unerbittlichkeit vorwärts kommt, ohne dass die Noth sich allzusehr verriethe, welche jede lange Entbehrung von Licht und Luft mit sich bringt; man könnte ihn selbst bei seiner dunklen Arbeit zufrieden nennen. Scheint es nicht, dass irgend ein Glaube ihn führt, ein Trost entschädigt? Dass er vielleicht seine eigne lange Finsterniss haben will, sein Unverständliches, Verborgenes, Räthselhaftes, weil er weiss, was er auch haben wird: seinen eignen Morgen, seine eigne Erlösung, seine eigne *Morgenröthe*?... Gewiss, er wirdt zurückkehren: fragt ihn nicht, was er da unten will, er wird es euch selbst schon sagen, dieser scheinbare Trophonios und Unterirdische, wenn er erst wieder „Mensch geworden" ist. Man verlernt gründlich das Schweigen, wenn man so lange, wie er, Maulwurf war, allein war- - (11).

On the basis of this quotation and other statements, I would propose that the poetic image of the mole 'digging for truth' is a fitting description for both Nietzsche and Kundera as thinkers and writers, and that, as a symbol, it may very well stand for that particular trait which unites them. The central image of the quote is the mole that digs with unrelenting passion for a hole in the earth --it is said to endure as a being that is "content" with itself and with its role. In its dark world of disintegrating truths, it eagerly awaits the prospect of a "shimmering dawn" at the end of the tunnel.

Yet, the experience of the thinker as mole resembles death itself: "deprived of light and oxygen" for an extended period of time, in a state of persistent and complete isolation from its environment, the thinker as mole must become "human" again. It must leave its existence of solitude and reflection (after all, all it could do is scrutinize the self), and be one with its fellow human beings. Yet, how can it after such a harrowing experience? After all the knowledge the thinker has acquired and 'dug up' as mole? We may have to somewhat adjust the image here: both Nietzsche and Kundera, yet the latter possibly even more so than the first, can be said to resemble the mole that must stay underground, not because it wishes to, but because it is forced to do so by the too brightly shining light of the outside world itself. I would argue that the main drive behind these thinkers, in a procedure of poetic description much the same as Kundera's, can be explained in terms of the image of a mole condemned to stay below the surface of the ground.

In his argument on the sensual experience of power, as an example to illustrate this point on the metaphor of the mole, Nietzsche asks the reader to "forgive" his attempt to thoroughly question even the most basic assumptions in life. It is as if Nietzsche himself deems as improper the character of a quest that is pushed to its limits thus far. Nietzsche states: "[a]lso Anderen wehe thun, um *sich* dadurch wehe zu thun, um damit wiederum über sich und sein Mitleiden zu triumphiren und in der äussersten Macht zu schwelgen! --Verzeihung für die Ausschweifung im Nachdenken über Alles, was in der seelischen Ausschweifung des Machtgelüstes auf Erden schon möglich gewesen sein kann!" (*M*, 113).

In much the same vein, Edouard, as one of the many protagonists in Kundera destined to undergo the predicament of ongoing denunciation, pushes his investigation to the extremes. Edouard, too, gradually realizes that essence, both of himself and of others, cannot exist --that opinions change whenever the self seeks to justify itself. The narrator subtly mentions Edouard's growing fondness of "lonely walks," thus presenting these as a clear symptom of unrelenting skepticism towards all that surrounds him.

The human mole and that for which it stands, that is, dissection of established truths until no truth can ultimately remain, ongoing quest for authenticity and scrutiny of the self until the very self must disappear, is an image that in Nietzsche's case is particularly appropriate to the following works: *Morgenröthe*, *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* and *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (Georgio Colli speaks of these works in terms of a "central position" in the context of his oeuvre as a whole, and a "bridge" to Nietzsche's final creative period).[14] An analysis on the close affinities between Nietzsche and Kundera, in my opinion, will be most rewarding from the perspective of thoughts elaborated in these particular works. This is also because Kundera explicitly refers to these works.[15]

In his commentary to the *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Colli argues that no desire in Nietzsche is more intense than his striving for knowledge (which in Nietzsche's vocabulary appears as *Erkenntnis*), yet also that Nietzsche's *Erkenntnis* is a rather destructive type of knowledge. From the terrors of Dionysian truth, Nietzsche goes on to investigate those of the insignificance of human beings in the face of history and eternal recurrence. Colli states:

> [Nach der Bezeichnung als Erkenntnis (...) die aufrüttelnde dionysische Intuition von der grauenerregenden Wurzel des Daseins] (...) folgte die Eroberung [in Nietzsche's case] weiterer Erkenntnisse: die Geschichte als Bewußtmachung der Irrtümer und Schrecknisse des Menschen, als Enthüllung, daß die Vergangenheit mit einer nicht wiedergutzumachenden Summe von Schicksalsschlägen auf uns lastet -und daß das Studium dieser Vergangenheit das Leben auslöscht und die schöpferische Kraft abstumpft (...) (*KSA*, 3, 662).

I would argue that knowledge in both Nietzsche and Kundera is generally oppressive or even shattering, and this particularly to the well-being of these thinkers themselves. A definition of history as a strictly accidental accumulation of human errors and cruelty, for instance, is an idea that reverberates in Kundera as well as in 'the Nietzsche' of these four works. The past weighs on our shoulders like a heavy burden, and no mistake made in our earlier lives can ever be redeemed. It is a knowledge which teaches human beings that their own personal freedom is limited, if not downright illusory.

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[14] „Tatsächlich ist [*Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*] in Nietzsches Leben „zentral", nicht nur in dem äußeren Sinn, daß es eine Mittelstellung innerhalb seiner literarischen Produktion einnimmt, sondern auch in dem subtileren, daß es sich wie ein magischer Augenblick der Ausgewogenheit in seine Schriften einfügt, als seine einzige Erfahrung völliger „Gesundheit": zwar sind alle Extreme vorhanden, aber in entspannter Weise miteinander verbunden, unter Kontrolle gehalten und von jedem Fanatismus befreit" (*KSA*, 660).

Eternal recurrence as a concept, which implies the inescapable nature of every action performed in the past in terms of repercussions for the present, appears in Nietzsche's the *Fröhliche Wissenschaft* as well as in Kundera's *L'insoutenable légèreté de l'être*. Both thinkers denounce the conscious (or subconscious) dissimulation of the basic truths of existence behind a mask of plenitude and harmony. Kundera speaks of "kitsch" in those places where, in my opinion, Nietzsche speaks of "eingefleischte Unschuld"[16] (for instance, in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*). Rather than disapproving of those who simply negate life because of the terrors and truths involved in it (the Christian faith, for instance, is said to negate life because of its emphasis on suffering), both Nietzsche and Kundera denounce the false and all too eager acceptance of life by those who deny the very existence of these dark truths themselves. Suffering and the intricate ways in which human beings both seek and attempt to avoid it is a phenomenon that preoccupies both Nietzsche and Kundera.

Yet there is more that links these thinkers: there is the awareness of language, and the insufficiency of words to describe thoughts and insights. There

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[15] See footnote 17.

is the concern with style and the most authentic way in which to convey thought, that is, new thought. The Nietzsche who critiques and investigates issues such as dialectical thinking, origin, the act of understanding, free will, and the need for equality, to name but a few of the major points of critique in Nietzsche, appears in some way or other in Kundera's oeuvre too. And there is a similar artistic drive that motivates the thinkers. Neither Nietzsche nor Kundera are teachers per se. Both are aware of their power to manipulate truth instead of revealing it (manipulation of truth is a valid description of art), and for both, strictly speaking, their truths are very personal. Ultimately their investigation is an investigation of and into the self, and the truths they can be said to reveal for personal use only. In the previously mentioned commentary, Colli argues that Nietzsche's writing, and especially the aphoristic writings such as *Morgenröthe* and the *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, requires a special art of reading. That is, one which entails the reader's naivety rather than his or her expertise, esthetic pleasure rather than high expectations for a methodical dispelling of myth and description of truth. The quote reads:

> (...) das tiefe Graben im inneren Brunnen der Erkenntnis, das Emporschnellen von Wahrheiten, die Suche nach einer Verhüllung dieser Wahrheiten, ihre Versetzung mit einer Droge, einem „kleinen Betrug"--das sind die Dinge, die Nietzsches Faszination ausmachen: Und es ist gut, daß der Leser das alles weiß, denn er muß lernen, von Nietzsche zu nehmen, aber auch sich gegen ihn zu wehren. (...) Wenn man wenigstens begreift, daß es sich hier um eine ganz eigene Art handelt, alle Dinge der Welt zu erfassen und in den Griff zu

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[16] The translation is: "incorporated innocence." Yet, Nietzsche uses here the adjective "eingefleischt" which is related to the English noun "flesh," and which has a more '"bodily" quality.

> bekommen --das nämlich bedeutet, sich selbst zu durchforschen--, wenn man wahrnimmt, wie alle Überzeugungen, und nicht nur die moralischen, weggefegt werden, dann ist das schon genug --für naive wie für kluge Leser" (*KSA*, 656).

Thus, one might state that Nietzsche and Kundera as searching human moles stand for this sheer uncontrollable desire to analyze, dissect and demythologize accepted truths and beliefs, until all truth and belief must disappear. Yet, the human mole also stands for solitude and isolation: the knowledge it obtains is first and foremost personal knowledge, that is, obtained through the self, and intended for the self. The following will be an analysis of the more striking similarities between Nietzsche and Kundera. As a guideline in this analysis should stand this poetic image of the mole as something that somehow reveals the essence of their being and their position as writers.

A set of common preoccupations: esthetic conception of the novel to describe a trans-metaphysical reality, terminological affinities and ethical concerns

The novel as a collection of aphorisms

In his previously mentioned essay entitled *Les testaments trahis*, Kundera speaks of the specific way in which Nietzsche structured his most important works. Based upon what Kundera terms a "compositional archetype," these works contain a multitude of short, aphoristic passages in which thoughts and insights appear, as in a musical chain of sounds and beats, devoid of the usual traits of style such as transitions, introductions and conclusions. The structure is one of a lack of structure. Ideas and witticisms just stand by themselves, without any authorial guidance as to the inner hierarchy to which they comply. The text in fragments is all there is, without any real indication as to its deeper meaning; it stands as a perfect expression of existence itself. Kundera argues:

> Dans les six livres qui représentent sa maturité (...), Nietzsche poursuit, développe, élabore, affirme, affine le même archétype compositionnel. Principes: l'unité élémentaire du livre est le chapitre; sa longueur va d'une seule phrase à plusieurs pages; sans exception, les chapitres ne consistent qu'en un seul paragraphe; ils sont toujours numérotés (...). (...) Ainsi une composition est née qui est à la fois maximalement articulée (divisée en nombreuses unités relativement autonomes) et maximalement unie (les mêmes thèmes reviennent constamment). Voilà en même temps une composition pourvue d'un extraordinaire sens du rythme basé sur la capacité d'alterner de courts et de longs chapitres (...). Mais surtout: voilà une composition où il n'y a aucune nécessité de remplissages, de transitions, de passages faibles, et où la tension ne baisse jamais car on ne voit que les pensées en train d'accourir „du dehors, d'en haut ou d'en bas, tels des événements, tels des coups de foudre" (200-1).[17]

The idea behind this structure of fragments and aphorisms, and Kundera makes this point clear, is that the philosopher's thought should be rendered as quickly and accurately as possible, as if the thought should appear beyond the distorting influence of the intellect itself. Thoughts and insights, in Nietzsche's words, are like a "flash of lightning," and the only way in which to capture their essence is by making them appear in writing in a much similar fashion --with the speed of lightning. Sharp insights in whichever form and shape, as a more authentic expression of being and of life, resist any attempt at systematic organization. If these elements are nonetheless made to depend on a system, they lose their strength and originality (and their original meaning?). And creating a system, as an attempt to fill in the missing gaps, provide transitional passages, create an interesting narrative by incorporating these thoughts or occurrences, is the inevitable distortion of what otherwise would be a more genuine expression of being.

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[17] Kundera speaks of *Morgenröthe*, *Menschliches Allzumenschliches*, *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, and *Götzen-Dämmerung*.

Kundera quotes Nietzsche when he speaks of the "profound" and "inexhaustible" nature of books that maintain this aphoristic style. Nietzsche's reference to the depth and complexity of Pascal's *Pensées*, for instance, indicates that the book is a more authentic expression of life as it is. Existence as it presents itself to human beings is a chaotic flow of thoughts, insights, events and occurrences that lack an all-encompassing system or structure. If honest, the philosopher realizes that he is merely struck by thoughts --much like a flash of lightning--, beyond whatever ideological imperative or law that wishes to impose the conscious mind. About the fleeting nature of the very insight that the philosopher does in fact nothing but 'receive' his or her own thought, Nietzsche argues in one of his self-reflexive aphorisms:

> Seufzer. --Ich erhaschte diese Einsicht unterwegs und nahm rasch die nächsten schlechten Worte, sie festzumachen, damit sie mir nicht wieder danvonfliege. Und nun ist sie mir an diesen dürren Worten gestorben und hängt und schlottert in ihnen --und ich weiss kaum mehr, wenn ich sie ansehe, wie ich ein solches Glück haben konnte, als ich diesen Vogel fieng (*FW*: 298).

In this thought as occurrence, Nietzsche "sigh[s]" to express frustration: the thought that struck his mind is as jittery and nervous as a bird. To indicate the ephemeral nature of the insight and his desire to hold on to it, Nietzsche uses the German verb "erhaschen," which has its equivalent in the English "to snatch" or "snatch away," and which expresses a sudden and eager movement by the hand. It is as if the obtaining of the thought can solely take place by an act of surprise.

And yet, the thought as it appeared "dies," once it "rests" in the philosopher's hand. Words are like a cage that 'kills' the liveliness of the thought as bird at the moment it arrives. Nietzsche uses the adjective "dürr" and the verbs "hängen" and "schlottern" to describe the sterile and improper effect of words, as if words are clothes that can never properly fit. Language remains insufficient as to the faithful identification of the object it is said to grasp.

For Kundera, however, the aphoristic style, as a more authentic expression of being, is precisely this trait which distinguishes the novel from other genres and disciplines. Nietzsche can be said to have approached the novel in form and content, and the novel in turn to have approached Nietzsche. With the exception of the nineteenth century novel concerned with truth and objectivity, what

Kundera terms the 'real' European novel, that is, a genre or current which started with authors such as Cervantes and Rabelais, has always problematized existence, defied the attempt at a systematic organization of thought and ideas and has always been susceptible to include a wide variety of human experience.

The true novel, too, has shunned ideology, consistency of thought and objective truth. I'm quoting here in detail a funny passage from *Les testaments trahis*[18] in which Kundera discusses the novelist's desire and potential to follow whatever fascination he or she has at a particular moment during the process of writing. Kundera, to make his point, uses the case of Rabelais, this archetypal novelist:

> Pour Rabelais, la dichotomie des thèmes et des ponts, du premier et de l'arrière-plan est chose inconnue. Lestement, il passe d'un sujet grave à l'énumération des méthodes que le petit Gargantua inventa pour se torcher le cul, et pourtant, esthétiquement, tous ces passages, futiles ou graves, ont chez lui la même importance, me procurent le même plaisir. C'est ce qui m'enchantait chez lui et chez d'autres romanciers anciens: ils parlent de ce qu'ils trouvent fascinant et ils s'arrêtent quand la fascination s'arrête. Leur liberté de composition m'a fait rêver: écrire sans fabriquer un suspense, sans construire une histoire et simuler vraisemblance, écrire sans décrire une époque, un milieu, une ville; abandonner tout cela et n'être au contact que de l'essentiel; ce qui veut dire: créer une composition où des ponts et des remplissages n'auraient aucune raison d'être et où le romancier ne serait pas obligé, pour satisfaire la forme et ses diktats, de s'éloigner, même d'une seule ligne, de ce qui lui tient à coeur, de ce qui le fascine (189).

It is interesting to observe to what extent Kundera pushes this argument of a rapprochement between the novel and philosophy, and how he claims in fact a position of supremacy for the first. Though Heidegger may argue that all previous philosophical understanding is characterized by a neglect of what being entails beyond the all too human, pre-established conception of being itself, Kundera holds that it is precisely the European novel that has always fulfilled this role of a critical investigation into our existence. In his collection of essays entitled *L'art du roman*, Kundera states that the novel's rationale so far has always been "de nous protéger contre 'l'oubli de l'être'" (33).

Being as being, for instance, is expressed in the rigorous lack of a hierarchy that can no longer be said to exist between the different sections, styles and registers in the works of an author such as Rabelais. "[T]hemes," stylistic "bridges," "background" information, "main" narrative, seriousness and plain trivial fun, --all the traditional pillars of how literary meaning is established fuse into something which is now strictly text, that is, a flow of words and ideas grasped by the author at will, beyond whatever concern of ideological consistency. Somewhat provokingly, Kundera speaks of Heidegger's own neglect, yet in his case of that of the genre of the pre-nineteenth century novel as an eager exploration of the intricacies of being:

> (...) tous les grands thèmes existentiels que Heidegger analyse dans [*Sein und Zeit*], les jugeant délaissés par toute la philosophie européenne antérieure, ont été dévoilés, montrés, éclairés par quatre siècles de roman (quatre siècles de réincarnation européenne du roman). Un par un, le roman a découvert, à sa propre façon, par sa propre logique, les différents aspects de l'existence (19).

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[18] Kundera does not capitalize these words in the title.

Thus, as Kundera argues, Nietzsche's rejection of a systematic type of philosophy to describe being, his attempt to extend philosophy into the realm of "all that is human" (152), and his aphoristic style as a more authentic way of expressing reality all turn his philosophy into a much more 'literary' phenomenon. After all, Nietzsche did write a 'fictional' type of philosophy in the form of his *Also Sprach Zarathustra*.

And, similarly, Kundera can be said to have extended and explored the parameters and the form of the novel. Beyond the traditional concern with the narrative as an entity in itself, Kundera emphasizes that of the novel's "unité thématique" (*L'art*: 106), a unity of investigation assured by seemingly and also genuinely disparate sections that evolve around a similar question or theme. All that emerges is an "interrogation existentielle" (*L'art*: 108) (every theme is nothing more or less than the exploration of a given word or concept), shaped by sections that now merely function as a means to explore, and this in whichever direction the theme or question allows the imagination to go.

The narrative, which evolves on different levels and in different areas of investigation, thus becomes a much more self-conscious affair. In *L'art du roman*, Kundera states that he likes in the story to "intervenir de temps en temps directement, comme auteur, comme moi-même" (103). Philosophical reflections fuse with those of a psychological nature, --with fiction, with fact and sociological observation, all into a story, book or novel based on a few thematic concerns only. That which now emerges is a multi-layered investigation in which all narrative authorities, such as Kundera, the narrator and the different protagonists, converge into a single, and yet polyphonous sound.

In his book *Le livre du rire et de l'oubli*, the narrator speaks about angels and laughter, and the interesting point to make here is that beyond the incorporating of these themes into a narrative with characters and plot, the narrator deals with these in terms of an "aside" (an "à propos") to the main story. The larger narrative, which consists at this point in the novel of three shorter and independent narratives, both of a fictional and autobiographical nature, is interrupted, and what follows is a half-serious, more metaphysical than literary reflection on laughter as such. The metaphysical digression is introduced as an "à propos" to a story in which laughter figures as a fictional topic, and the heading appears in brackets: "[à] propos des deux rires" (91).

The reflection is consistent as far as content and ideological importance is concerned. The narrator speaks of two types of laughter, that is, the first expressed by the devil, the second by the angel, which distinguish themselves by the lack or abundance of meaning under which they operate. The devil's laughter is said to deny meaning while the angel's, in an attempt to overpower the devil's, forcefully indicates that the world makes sense. Though consistent as far as ideology is concerned, the theory on laughter in the novel is not pursued in a very logical fashion, nor is it used as an ethical basis to distinguish between the different protagonists. The shorter narrative, in which figure Michèle, Gabrielle and their teacher as a triumvirate of "[laughing] angels," functions, in my opinion, as an illustration of the many types of laughter, that is, types for which no words exist, rather than as an exemplification of the previously elaborated theory. Though laughter as a subversive and liberating force may generally prevail in Kundera, the specific ways in which laughter is dealt with in this novel makes it emerge as a very fluid phenomenon. Michèle and Gabrielle express laughter throughout the entire chapter, yet each time they laugh the truths behind these laughters change (that is, the world view, the laughter of which is an expression).

philosophical terminology

As demonstrated in the previous section by the treatment of laughter, Kundera's independence from restrictions imposed by the concern for the narrative as a whole, which among other things includes the development of plot and characters in a chronological fashion, allows, in my opinion, for a very specific way of introducing philosophy into the novel. Kundera's narrator explicitly elaborates on certain issues in sections that somehow fall outside of the main, fictional or non-fictional narrative, or collection of sub-narratives.

Rather striking, in this context, is the philosophical dimension of the majority of the concepts that Kundera uses. Kundera's oeuvre is a web of metaphysical notions that are part of an exploration of the world and of the human condition. All notions are subjected to a sheer phenomenological investigation, that is, a type of investigation which is related to what Kundera at some point terms the application of "existential mathematics." In Kundera, there is an attempt to understand life in all its aspects and it is precisely this deliberate attempt at all-encompassing understanding which, in my opinion, makes his oeuvre philosophical. Again, the exploration in Kundera is often nothing more than a description of things in life, beyond the ethical question of change and possible alternatives.

The concepts and their treatment in Kundera have a clearly Nietzschean resonance. A quick look at the titles and sub-titles of his novels teaches us that Kundera speaks of common human realities such as laughter, forgetting, meaning, love, shame, humiliation, lightness and joy, and in all cases he deals with these concepts in terms of an existential phenomenon. Just as Nietzsche, Kundera asks himself the both simple and intricate question of what it means for human beings to simply laugh, to forget, to attribute meaning, to love, to be ashamed, to feel humiliation, lightness and joy. And all these notions, in a quite similar fashion, appear as independent questions in Nietzsche's previously mentioned books, from his *Morgenröthe* to his *Genealogie der Moral*.

When speaking of shame, for instance, Kundera defines this concept in terms of a pre-existing condition. Human beings may not wish for shame to impinge on their lives; but the fact is that it often does. Shame is a fact of life, though definitely not always negative.[19] It expresses for human beings the incapacity to meet a set of standards which seem to be imposed by the outside world and the self. Kundera acknowledges the interesting truth that human beings are almost always ashamed of themselves, at least to a certain degree, and that, somehow, they are taught to comply to an idealized version of humanity and of themselves. Shame in Kundera's metaphysical elaboration is related to the concept of "kitsch" in that kitsch is the mask to which human beings are expected to conform --which at the same time, however, is an ideal and standard which they often remain incapable of reaching. In *L'immortalité*, Kundera provides an existential equation of an almost mathematical precision: "[l]a pudeur signifie que nous nous défendons de ce que nous voulons, tout en éprouvant de la honte à vouloir ce dont nous nous défendons" (354).

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[19] In *Les testament trahis*. for instance, Kundera speaks of shame as a means to protect oneself against the curious and obtrusive gaze of others. In this instance, he seems to argue that hiding the deeper, more intimate self is a very human thing to do. Kundera states: „La pudeur est l'une des notions-clés des Temps modernes, époque individualiste qui, aujourd'hui, imperceptiblement, s'éloigne de nous; pudeur: réaction épidermique pour défendre sa vie privée; pour exiger un rideau sur une fenêtre; pour insister afin qu'une lettre adressée à A ne soit pas lue par B. L'une des situations élementaires du passage à l'âge adulte, l'un des premiers conflits avec les parents c'est la

There is a very similar exploration in Nietzsche, as well as a similar manner in which the argument takes shape. In the second part of his *Zur Genealogie*, Nietzsche speaks of the "shame of human beings for themselves," and of the way in which human beings most often deny the truth of their 'bodily' predicament:

> Auf dem Wege zum „Engel" (...) hat sich der Mensch jenen verdorbenen Magen und jene belegte Zunge angezüchtet, durch die ihm nicht nur die Freude und Unschuld des Thiers widerlich, sondern das Leben selbst unschmackhaft geworden ist: - so dass er mitunter vor sich selbst mit zugehaltener Nase dasteht und mit Papst Innocenz dem Dritten missbilligend den Katalog seiner Widerwärtigkeiten macht („unreine Erzeugung, ekelhafte Ernährung im Mutterleibe, Schlechtigkeit des Stoffs, aus dem der Mensch sich entwickelt,

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revendication d'un tiroir pour ses lettres et ses carnets, la revendication d'un tiroir à clé; on entre dans l'âge adulte par *la révolte de la pudeur*" (302).

> scheusslicher Gestank, Absonderung von Speichel, Urin und Koth)" (*GM*: II, 7).

Laughter in both Nietzsche and Kundera, as another topic of explicit philosophical inquiry, figures as an integral part of an elaborate conception of life and being. If Kundera speaks of the devil's laughter as symbolizing the absence of meaning, Nietzsche refers to laughter that is "heiter," yet only when it negates the tragic. Of specific interest in the case of Kundera is the fact that Nietzsche, too, speaks of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* in terms of an important literary event, yet with Nietzsche it is referred to as "das heiterste der Bücher" (*GM*: II, 6). Nietzsche emphasizes the sheer inevitable truth about the comic and often stimulating effect that witnessing the noble knight or any other person suffer evokes. Laughter, in Nietzsche's view, is turned into a liberated and "bright" type of laughter, and as such a philosophical concept within a philosophical configuration. Yet, laughter is bright only when it is no longer accompanied by self-deluding compassion. Nietzsche argues:

> (...) wir lesen heute den ganzen Don Quixote mit einem bittren Geschmack auf der Zunge, fast mit einer Tortur und würden damit seinem Urheber und dessen Zeitgenossen sehr fremd, sehr dunkel sein, --sie lasen ihn mit allerbestem Gewissen als das heiterste der Bücher, sie lachten sich an ihm fast zu Tod (...).

Nietzschean laughter then, as exemplified in this quote, is no ordinary type of laughter. As in the case of Kundera, 'real' laughter stands for an entire approach to life. It marks a certain understanding of what life entails, a definition, a structuring. Quite similarly, the all too human act of forgetting receives a more intricate meaning once it is integrated within the philosophical constellation of both thinkers. In his *Zur Genealogie*, Nietzsche subjects that which initially seems a vice to the analytical gaze of investigation, and turns the vice into a virtue. The result is the observation that forgetting is no neglect, but in fact one of the pre-existing conditions of human beings and of life itself. Nietzsche states:

> Vergesslichkeit ist keine blosse vis inertiae, wie die Oberflächlichen glauben, sie ist vielmehr ein aktives, im strengsten Sinne positives Hemmungsvermögen, dem es zuzuschreiben ist, dass was nur von uns erlebt, erfahren, in uns hineingenommen wird, uns im Zustande der Verdauung (...) ebenso wenig in's Bewusstsein tritt, als der ganze tausendfältige Prozess, mit dem sich unsre leibliche Ernährung (...) abspielt. (...) ein wenig Stille, ein wenig tabula rasa des Bewusstseins, damit wieder Platz wird für Neues, vor Allem für die vornehmeren Funktionen und Funktionäre, für Regieren, Voraussehn, Vorausbestimmen (...) --das ist der Nutzen der (...) aktiven Vergesslichkeit (...): womit sofort abzusehn ist, inwiefern es kein Glück, keine Heiterkeit, keine Hoffnung, keinen Stolz, keine *Gegenwart* geben könnte ohne Vergesslichkeit (*GM*: II, 1).

There are many parallels one should make note of here: the notion of meaning, for instance, functions in both Nietzsche and Kundera as a necessary means for human beings to survive, rather than as something inherently present in the things around us. In *Morgenröthe*, Nietzsche speaks of the "loss of meaning" as a result of the ongoing quest for origin and meaning: "[m]it der Einsicht in den Ursprung nimmt die Bedeutungslosigkeit des Ursprungs zu" (I, 44).

Kundera, in turn, speaks here of the "lightness of being," and relates this particular concept to the lack of meaning and importance of the things we believe we accomplish in our lives. Lightness and weight, which are concepts that in Kundera are based on the "weight" that Nietzsche attributes to his theory of eternal recurrence, operate as existential truths in what has now become an intricate conception of being. In this conception, this elaborate metaphysical construct, lightness stands for freedom, weight for oppression. Yet, meaning also stands for relief, and the lack of it, for oppression. The truth about the complexity of being reveals itself: human beings both desire and fear the lightness of being and the lack of meaning in their lives.

In this particular section, I have attempted to demonstrate that every word, notion or concept in Nietzsche and Kundera, as far as it figures as part of their investigation into being, receives a more intricate meaning once it appears within the parameters of their philosophical configuration. The word is thus turned into a concept, becoming more intricate and endowed with meaning beyond the literal. It now has an existential dimension. The notion of laughter, for instance, appears as 'real' and 'bright' laughter, and as such it stands for a (more authentic) way of life, an existential condition, an understanding of being. And the philosophical construct of both thinkers, with operators such as shame, laughter, meaning, forgetting, is very similar, at least in principle.

Ethical concerns: the remedy of slow investigation

If in the previous section we made an attempt to show how both thinkers dealt with a rather objective investigation into being, that is beyond the concern with an appropriate response to the results of their investigation, this particular section will be focused on some of the answers or clues both Nietzsche and Kundera provide in terms of a possible strategy towards life. I will indicate one or two points that seem to recur within the works of both thinkers, and then especially to those which are most conducive to the dialogue which is said to exist between them.

The purpose here is not to compare the extent of what they propose in terms of a practical and constructive philosophy of life. Beyond the dissection of truths and myths, one could legitimately claim the presence of a specific or less specific set of directives that somehow indicate to human beings how to lead their lives. Both thinkers seem to propose a more authentic way of life, even if, strictly speaking, their findings can only pertain to themselves. In fact, their ongoing quest for authenticity in life (if anything, it is their sense of authenticity which should be defined as their most important ethical concern) makes the truths that they propose very personal truths indeed.

In this particular section, I will speak of a specific concern that somehow precedes all others, precisely because it is related to this unrelenting sense of authenticity. The authority of the self must face its own disintegration.

Both Nietzsche and Kundera critique the way in which the transcendental ego has been conceived since Plato and Descartes. Nietzsche, for instance, indicates that the Cartesian ego is a grammatical fiction: for him, language creates a sense of individuality, rather than describe it. Language subverts the very attempt at authenticity itself. Both thinkers explicitly question the act of understanding, and are prone to define this most common of human phenomena in terms of an inevitable appropriation. The quest for a sense of authenticity leads to a rigorous, and elusive, authenticity of the self. Ultimately, human beings cannot know the stirrings of their very own souls, nor the secret promptings of their fellow human beings. What emerges, as a result of this persistent sense of authenticity, is a very radical and reductive type of philosophy, with a subsequently very limited degree of constructive ideology.

In one of the aphorisms of his *Morgenröthe*, for instance, Nietzsche speaks of the intricate way in which artists, poets and writers are somehow aware of their own manipulation of truths and of language, and this despite whatever desire for authenticity they may feel: "[n]ichts wird von Künstlern, Dichtern und Schriftstellern mehr gefürchtet, als jenes Auge, welches ihren kleinen Betrug sieht (...) welches ihnen nachrechnet, wenn sie Wenig für Viel verkaufen wollten, wenn sie zu erheben und zu schmücken suchten, ohne selber erhoben zu sein" (223).

There is in Nietzsche a general distrust of language and of words, something we already established in one of the previous quotations. Words 'kill' the liveliness of the thought and of the insight whenever these are used to capture their essence. There is also an awareness that language is insufficient in describing and reflecting the complexity and sophistication of life. About the intricate notion of compassion, Nietzsche states: "wie plump fällt die Sprache mit ihrem Einen Worte über so ein polyphones Wesen her!" (133).

A very similar distrust of language appears in Kundera, with whom there is an almost obsessive awareness about the endless shifting of meaning inherent in language. Kundera's concern with appropriate and authentic translations is unrelenting, and, in my view, indicative of a deeper --though impossible-- wish to fixate meaning in texts. In *L'art du roman*, Kundera indignantly speaks about the translator's practice of replacing the author's original words by synonyms, and thus changing meaning: "[l]es traducteurs sont fous des synonymes. [Je récuse la notion même de synonyme: chaque mot a son sens propre et il est sémantiquement irremplaçable]" (178). Synonyms do not exist in a world where every word has its own realm of signification. For Kundera too, language is insufficient in describing reality. On the concept of laughter, Kundera states: "[i]l y a deux rires et nous n'avons pas de mot pour les distinguer" (93). Language plays a trick on us because it leads a life of its own, amputated from the speaker's original intentions.

With Nietzsche and Kundera, that is, the 'Nietzsche' of the four works that mark a stage of transition in his oeuvre as a whole, the individual loses much of his or her authority, both when passing on a useful and valid message to, and receiving ideas from, other individuals. For both Nietzsche and Kundera, the subject as it is traditionally conceived is in reality a 'split' subject: no substance or essence can ultimately be argued to stand behind the different manifestations of a particular human being. At no point can an individual be certain to speak the truth, to be aware of what he or she wishes to accomplish deep down inside, or know that he or she is entirely free of self-deception. No human being is able to detach him- or herself from his or her own words, as in a space of free thought and expression beyond the one determined by self-interest. The message is coloured by the hidden motivations of which the self largely remains unaware.

In many a passage of his *Morgenröthe*, Nietzsche speaks of the incapacity of human beings to know themselves, --of their incapacity to gauge their own moods and motivations behind their acts and words. Nietzsche argues: "[w]ie weit Einer seine Selbstkenntniss auch treiben mag, Nichts kann doch unvollständiger sein, als das Bild der gesammten *Triebe*, die sein Wesen constituiren" (119).

Nietzsche's truths, in his own words, are nothing but the meagre result of an internal fight among drives that each strive for a temporary state of supremacy. In his *Immortalité*, Kundera has one of the protagonists argue that the 'real' self does not exist but in the minds of others: "notre moi est une simple apparence, insaisissable, indescriptible, confuse, tandis que la seule réalité (...) est notre image dans les yeux des autres" (156). There can be no true authority in the message one conveys, if the message is in fragments and known to be prescribed by changing moods and hidden motivations.

And neither is the individual capable of fully grasping the extent of the message that is conveyed. For both Nietzsche and Kundera, the receiver of thought and of insights is limited as far as the intellectual assimilation of that which is new, special or intricate is concerned. Nietzsche very explicitly turns the act of understanding into a problematic: all too often understanding reveals itself to be an act of appropriation and domestication (which means making the thought one's own by simply denying or just not perceiving all that is different in it from one's own realm of experience).

At times, Nietzsche speaks of this all too human act of appropriation in terms of an existential inevitability. In *Morgenröthe*, for instance, Nietzsche refers to the human condition of ignorance as the "prison [house]" of being: "[m]ein Auge, wie stark oder schwach es nun ist, sieht nur ein Stück weit, und in diesem Stück webe und lebe ich, diese Horizont-Linie ist mein nächstes grosses und kleines Verhängniss, dem ich nicht entlaufen kann" (117). While Nietzsche speaks of human beings as spiders that "can only catch [the things] that fall into [their] web," Kundera in his *testaments trahis* refers to the human state of "blindness," a condition of life that human beings are all too eager to hide for themselves: "[l]'homme est celui qui avance dans le brouillard. Mais quand il regarde en arrière pour juger les gens du passé il ne voit aucun brouillard sur leur chemin" (279).

The aggressive and appropriative character of life and of human beings is a recurring theme in the 'Nietzsche' of these four works --life is will to power and there is no use in denying this. In his *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Nietzsche argues that "[life itself] ist wesentlich Aneignung, Verletzung, Überwaltigung des Fremden und Schwächeren, Unterdrückung, Härte, Aufzwängung eigner Formen, Einverleibung und mindestens, mildestens, Ausbeutung (...)" (258). Appropriation is a fact of life, and at times Nietzsche argues for acceptance of this truth. One of the pre-existing conditions for the human spirit to be able to survive and function may very well be this "[tendency] das Neue dem Alten anzuähnlichen, das Mannichfaltige zu vereinfachen, das gänzlich Widersprechende zu übersehen oder wegzustossen (...)" (230).

It is obvious that after this degree of skepticism towards the subject's authority and capacity to speak and listen in a space free from truth-subverting circumstances, the suggestions for a constructive alternative ideology can only be modest. No building can stand once its foundations have disappeared. An initial impetus towards a practical philosophy of life in both Nietzsche and Kundera, if an ambituous project as such can still be seriously considered after the very foundations of human beings to understand, change and master their own world have been systematically taken away, is found in their approach to new thought. Both thinkers cultivate a similar type of sensibility towards difference and novelty, insofar as this sensibility is deemed possible. Their 'philosophy' is thus more the proposition of a strategy than a detailed set of philosophical premises and resolutions, more an ethical suggestion that precedes an elaborate philosophy than a philosophy proper.

In the preface to *Morgenröthe*, Nietzsche justifies the belated addition of the introduction to his book by indicating that the thought needed, and will need in the future, time to be digested, both for himself and the reader. While appealing to his imaginary readers, whom he addresses as sheer accomplices in a conspiracy of thought, Nietzsche indicates that the words that make up his knowledge should be uttered in a "secretive" fashion, and "slowly":

> Zuletzt aber: wozu müssten wir Das, was wir sind, was wir wollen und nicht wollen, so laut und mit solchem Eifer sagen? Sehen wir es kälter, ferner, klüger, höher an, sagen wir es, wie es unter uns gesagt werden darf, so heimlich, dass alle Welt es überhört, dass alle Welt uns überhört! Vor Allem sagen wir es *langsam*... Diese Vorrede kommt spät, aber nicht zu spät, was liegt im Grunde an fünf, sechs Jahren? Ein solches Buch, ein solches Problem hat keine Eile; überdies sind wir Beide Freunde des lento, ich ebensowohl als mein Buch. Man ist nicht umsonst Philologe gewesen, man ist es vielleicht noch, das will sagen, ein Lehrer des langsamen Lesens: --endlich schreibt man auch langsam. Jetzt gehört es nicht nur zu meinen Gewohnheiten, sondern auch zu meinem Geschmacke --einem boshaften Geschmacke vielleicht?-- Nichts mehr zu schreiben, womit nicht jede Art Mensch, die „Eile hat", zur Verzweiflung gebracht wird. Philologie nämlich ist jene ehrwürdige Kunst, welche von ihrem Verehrer vor Allem Eins heischt, bei Seite gehn, sich Zeit lassen, still werden, langsam werden--, als eine Goldschmiedekunst und --kennerschaft des *Wortes*, die lauter feine vorsichtige Arbeit abzuthun hat und Nichts erreicht, wenn sie es nicht lento erreicht. Gerade damit aber ist sie heute nöthiger als je, gerade dadurch zieht sie und bezaubert sie uns am stärksten, mitten in einem Zeitalter der „Arbeit", will sagen: der Hast, der unanständigen und schwitzenden Eilfertigkeit, das mit Allem gleich „fertig werden" will, auch mit jedem alten und neuen Buche: --sie selbst wird nicht so leicht irgend womit fertig, sie lehrt *gut* lesen, das heisst langsam, tief, rück- und vorsichtig, mit Hintergedanken, mit offen gelassenen Thüren, mit zarten Fingern und Augen lesen... Meine geduldigen Freunde, dies Buch wünscht sich nur vollkommene Leser und Philologen: lernt mich gut lesen!-

That which both Nietzsche and Kundera propose in terms of a strategy towards the acquisition of knowledge in life turns out to be the 'simple' advice of slowness. Nietzsche speaks of a reading strategy of "slow" and "deep" reading, of going "backwards," "forwards," "carefully," in fits and starts. "Peripheral thoughts" endlessly interrupt, subverting previous conclusions. Nietzsche speaks of reading with "tender fingers and eyes." The act or moment of understanding is delayed (is it indefinitely postponed?). Nietzsche pronounces words so slowly that these words lose their conventional meaning, perhaps even all meaning. Pushed to its extreme, slow reading breaks up the syntax of a sentence, and thus its intelligibility.

In his preface to *Genealogie der Moral*, Nietzsche speaks of the reader of aphorisms and of his or her art of careful interpretation in terms of a cow ready to chew its valuable cud. In the same preface, Nietzsche also indicates that no reader who has not been "deeply wounded" or "deeply enchanted" by his *Zarathustra* will truly know this book. Nietzsche at this point uses the verbs "verwunden" and "entzücken," and both indicate the pain inherent in the act of understanding as Nietzsche defines it. The noun "Entzückung," as previously established, refers in its older usage to the loss of sense and consciousness. Nietzsche's understanding is a delayed understanding, painful, difficult and self-dissolving, as if it deals with an understanding beyond meaning and beyond the intellect itself.

Kundera, too, speaks of a strategy of delay in order to acquire a deeper meaning and deeper knowledge. In his comments on a novel by Hermann Broch, Kundera states: "[i]l faut lire attentivement, lentement (...) s'arrêter sur les actions aussi illogiques que compréhensibles pour voir un ordre caché, soutterrain, sur lequel les décisions [des personnages] se fondent" (*L'art*: 83). In his *testaments*, Kundera states that in order to obtain the full extent of irony, one should read a particular novel "carefully," "two times or more." Slow reading, for Kundera too, is a prerequisite of understanding literature. The quality of slowness in general, is a condition for understanding life.

In one of his most recent works, which bears the significant title, *La lenteur*, Kundera as narrator defines slowness in terms of a sheer philosophy of life. The chevalier's capacity to savour, which means to slow down the effects of, the happiness brought to him by the spending of an illegitimate night with the lady of his dreams, is explained as a test case for the happiness of all humanity. The young chevalier in Kundera's novel cannot be sure about the meaning of his nightly escapade (a third protagonist informs the knight of the latter having been used for purposes of diversion only), yet the decision to ignore the intricate question of truth in this matter altogether makes it possible for him to enjoy the full extent of the event, that is, the love, however temporary, of the lady, the thrill of the illegitimate character of the affair, the excitement of love. Kundera's narrator tells us:

> Je veux encore contempler mon chevalier qui se dirige lentement vers la chaise. Je veux savourer le rythme de ses pas: plus il avance, plus ils ralentissent. Dans cette lenteur, je crois reconnaître une marque de bonheur. (...) Je t'en prie, ami, sois heureux. J'ai la vague impression que de ta capacité à être heureux dépend notre seul espoir (153-4).

Slow reading --of books, of life-- will generate knowledge and perhaps some truth, yet the goal of the investigation, as Kundera seems to argue here, is not the truth that emerges at the end of the line, but the act of reading and of searching itself. What is important to him is not so much the establishing of understanding, as the process in which understanding is established. This type of "slow" and "ruminating" investigation, in which every question makes another set of even more interesting questions and topics arise, in which the very process of establishing truths and counter-truths is savoured, is a strategy that is definitely reminiscent of Nietzsche's.

Nietzsche and Kundera: the differences

Playful reversal of a Nietzschean premise

In the final part of this chapter, I will indicate some of the differences between the two thinkers. I will speak more specifically about Kundera. I have introduced the previous part by referring to a polyphonous sound to describe the relationship between Nietzsche and Kundera. The sound may be harmonious, yet the elements or tones of which it is made up are not identical. In fact, the beauty of the polyphonous sound, and thus its raison d'être in a musical composition, resides within the difference in degree of highness and lowness of the tones that make up the sound.

Kundera's novel entitled *L'insoutenable légèreté de l'être* can be defined, in my view, in terms of a literary incarnation of this polyphonous sound, a sound that is produced by a rapprochement between the two thinkers. In it, Nietzsche appears as a playful and thought-provoking stimulant --not a truth nor a premise but as a question that is explored throughout the narrative. Kundera's narrator starts off with a description of Nietzsche's enigmatic theory of eternal recurrence:

> L'éternel retour est une idée mystérieuse et, avec elle, Nietzsche a mis bien des philosophes dans l'embarras: penser qu'un jour tout se répétera comme nous l'avons déjà vécu et que même cette répétition se répétera encore indéfiniment! Que veut dire ce mythe loufoque? (13).

What follows in the novel is an elaboration of Nietzsche's theory, yet it is clear from the start that Kundera proceeds with a playful exploration of the different premises. The title of the novel entails a dynamic reversal of Nietzsche's paradigm of lightness and weight. While Nietzsche speaks of eternal recurrence and of the apprehending of this truth in terms of "das grösste Schwergewicht" (*FW*, 341), Kundera refers to the human paradox --an apparent contradiction-- of "lightness" that is "unbearable," precisely because of its complete lack of weight. Nietzsche's attempt to "imbue" the human world of meaningless action with a *sense* of "heavy weight" (the eternal recurrence of things is indicative of an attempt to make the world metaphysical in that every act will be defined and judged according to its endless recurring) is subverted by Kundera's observation that human beings, beyond whatever deliberate attempt at attributing meaning to their insignificant worlds, always already establish sense, despite themselves, and they do this inevitably. Kundera seems to argue that, already, prior to whatever theoretical encouragement, human beings live their lives with the highest degree of intensity. Despite whatever claim of authenticity in life, people love the metaphysical sweat from their daily labour and their daily concerns. The simple truth in life is that things do not recur (Kundera expresses this particular truth of lightness of being in the German proverb "*einmal ist keinmal*"), yet also that we all act as if they did. The 'lightness' of being, that is, a world in which sense is absent, proves to be too heavy a burden for human beings to carry.

And thus Thomas, though in reality free from whatever responsibility towards his carefree love and lover, Tereza, feels oppressed by the need to take care of her. Thomas is haunted by the image of Tereza fabricated in his mind, an image in which Tereza appears as a child in a basket that floats on the river: "[i]l lui semblait que c'était un enfant qu'on avait déposé dans une corbeille enduite de poix et lâché sur les eaux d'un fleuve pour qu'il le recueille sur la berge de son lit" (17). While Nietzsche generally speaks of compassion in terms of a hidden manifestation of power, exercised by the one person on the one deemed inferior, Kundera makes his protagonist suffer from the terrible yet inevitable "weight" that compassion brings. Though a paradox, Thomas wishes in fact nothing else than to suffer from this weight, heavier than the "total weight of the Russian tanks":

> (...) [Thomas] se sentit accablé d'une pesanteur comme il n'en avait encore jamais connu. Toutes les tonnes de fer des chars russes n'étaient rien auprès de ce poids. Il n'est rien de plus lourd que la compassion. Même notre propre douleur n'est pas aussi lourde que la douleur coressentie avec un autre, pour un autre, à la place d'un autre, multipliée par l'imagination, prolongée dans des centaines d'échos (53).

It seems to me that at stake in Kundera's oeuvre is the complexity of the all too human condition and of life. A rigorous sense of authenticity may be required to lead a 'truer' life, the fact is, however, that human beings generally find this advice hard to follow. Even Kundera's more favoured protagonists, that is, the ones endowed with a more persuasive rhetorical authority, remain incapable of living by the rule of authenticity alone. Sabina, for instance, as definitely one of the most 'enlightened' protagonists in Kundera's oeuvre, admits to somehow believe in a few sentimental and petrified formulas herself, even though this belief takes place on a sub- rather than conscious level.

Yet, Kundera's discussion of what he terms 'kitsch,' that is, this self-deceiving mask of sentimental beauty, brings up another interesting point in a comparative analysis of Nietzsche and Kundera. It should be realized that *Kitsch* does not exist without its counterpart, *Kunst*, in the sense that the first is a failed derivative of the second, an immitation. In Kundera, there is a sense of a hidden purity or beauty behind the façade of sentimentality, something that is expressed by his discussions of (and emphasis on?) the concept of kitsch.

If in the *testaments* he speaks of the composer Stravinsky as someone who "[trampled on the existential need to consider] les yeux mouillés comme meilleurs que les yeux secs, la main posée sur le coeur meilleure que la main dans la poche, la croyance meilleure que le scepticisme, la passion meilleure que la sérénité" (84), what emerges behind the screen of distortions and sentimental appropriations of his music is a true and pure 'Stravinsky.' Behind the mask of kitsch hides a world that is not just more 'real,' but also purer, truer and more beautiful. Kundera's promulgated fusion of man and his act, of mind and thought, --his appeal to a realm beyond self-awareness and after-thoughts, --it all exudes, it seems to me, a certain nostalgia for purity, a desire for the ethereal. In a significant quote from his *testaments*, Kundera speaks of the "softly inhuman beauty" of a world beyond human interference and "aggressive" subjectivity, and he defines this beauty in terms of "comfort":

> (...) la non-sensibilité est consolante; le monde de la non-sensibilité, c'est le monde en dehors de la vie humaine; c'est l'éternité; „c'est la mer allée avec le soleil". Je me rappelle les années tristes que j'ai passées en Bohême au début de l'occupation russe. Je suis, alors, tombé amoureux de Varèse et de Xenakis: ces images de mondes sonores objectifs mais non existants m'ont parlé de l'être libéré de la subjectivité humaine, agressive et encombrante; elles m'ont parlé de la beauté doucement inhumaine du monde avant ou après le passage des hommes (89).

I would argue that in Nietzsche there is much less a sense of nostalgia for a world behind the world of appearances, because this world is truer and purer. There is much less a sense of a hidden beauty, waiting to be revealed by the artistic gaze of authenticity; Nietzsche's attempt to render things the way they are has the resonance of a necessity, of an imperative law. Nietzsche's knowledge is first and foremost terrifying knowledge. There is in Nietzsche no sense of intellectual or artistic superiority: 'real' art is not opposed to kitsch, there is just truth and untruth. Nietzsche's state of 'freedom' and of self-realization is not so much the removal from kitsch, as the ecstatic and painful awareness of kitsch as kitsch (*entzücktes Wissen*), --that of the human condition as it is ruled by fear-- and panic-inspiring knowledge about the revolting yet inevitable nature of kitsch in our lives.[20] Alan White's presentation of Nietzsche as a simple opponent to what Kundera terms 'kitsch,' and thus his use of Kundera's opposition to kitsch as an illustration to Nietzsche, is a too rash and simple conclusion.[21]

Related to this difficulty about the beauty of a 'truer' and inhuman world beyond kitsch, there is in Kundera a more pronounced tendency to consider a work of art as autonomous and pure. I already indicated that in Kundera there is a strong emphasis on 'real' art. Art as Kundera defines it is an expression of this world beyond kitsch. True art subverts the sentimental, metaphysical needs of human beings. Broch, Kafka, Janacek, Gombrowicz and Stravinsky, to name but a few of the many artists dealt with in the *testaments*, --all 'good' artists pass Kundera's test of complexity of thought. And their works of art stand by themselves, as a result of their "esthetic will." Kundera speaks of the "essence" of a work of art in terms of its "nouveauté" (287), its "esthétique difficile à saisir" (294).

It seems to me that in the 'Nietzsche' of his transitional works, the conception of art as autonomous and independent from the artist and his life is much less obvious. In his *Jenseits*, Nietzsche may indicate the necessity to separate a work of art from its conceiver, yet this separation seems to be advised for the purposes of "enjoy[ment]" only, rather than as a prerequisite for understanding: "[der Künstler] ist zuletzt nur die Vorausbedingung seines Werks (...), und somit, in den meisten Fällen, Etwas, das man vergessen muss, wenn man sich des Werks selbst erfreuen will" (III, 4). In one of the following sections, however, Nietzsche proposes to relate the aesthetic value of a work of art to the personal experiences of the artist (III, 6). And Nietzsche, in the same passage, is very ironic about the spectator's and artist's traditional criterion of "désintéressement," used to distinguish 'good' art from 'bad.' The aesthetic will of the artist cannot be totally separated from his or her personal experiences in life. The tendency in Kundera to turn art into a metaphysical entity does not appear in Nietzsche, at least not to the same extent.

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[20] In *L'art du roman*, Kundera speaks of Nietzsche as an opponent to kitsch, yet a direct link between Nietzsche and kitsch (or the rejection thereof) should be established with a certain hesitation. The question of Nietzsche and kitsch is more complex than is suggested in Kundera's quote: „l'aversion que Nietzsche a éprouvée pour les „jolis mots" et les „manteaux de parade" de Victor Hugo fut le dégoût du kitsch avant la lettre" (165).

To conclude our comparative analysis of Nietzsche and Kundera, we may choose to refer, one last time, to the metaphor of the polyphonous voice to describe the intricate dynamics of their relationship. The voice produced may consist of different tones and different notes, yet the tones and notes are in tune -- the overall sound of the voice is rich, more intricate and intriguing. If by way of comparison one should wish to use the same metaphor of the sound to characterize the relationship between Nietzsche, Hesse and Gide, one might have to conclude that the sound of their common voice is much less pure and attuned.

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[21] Allan White: *Within Nietzsche's Labyrinth*. New York & London: Routledge, 1990.

Both Gide's and Hesse's initial attempt to render a faithful sound in relation to Nietzsche's must have caused the tones from the different thinkers to be ultimately quite different and incompatible. There is in both Gide and Hesse a saturation of Nietzsche as a liberator of the senses and a destroyer of life-constricting values. Much less figures in their works the reflection and the prospect of a Nietzschean authority turned against itself.

Kundera's use of Nietzsche's thought is more playful and creative. In the *Unbearable Lightness of Being*, for instance, Nietzsche figures as a proponent of an interesting philosophical theory that is tested, problematized and discussed throughout the narrative. The theory does not appear as a serious philosophy of life, but as a thought-provoking question, a stimulating insight, not to be judged on terms of its validity but to be valued in its own right. Nietzsche here does not function as an instrument of liberation, because liberation as such is not sought after.

To be sure, differences between the thinkers remain. Kundera, after all, is more a political thinker, whose struggle is against Marxism (socialist realism in art) rather than Christianity. A point of historical reference in many a novel or text by Kundera is the Soviet aggression against his native country in 1968. And Kundera's rather elitist conception of art does not appear in Nietzsche, at least not to the same degree. The beauty of a world beyond the interference of human subjectivity may be reminiscent of certain passages in Nietzsche's *Geburt der Tragödie*, yet even in those instances this otherworldly beauty has a much more self-destructive quality.

Yet, again, the principles of investigation are the same: a radical scrutiny of being and of the self, the attempted disintegration of philosophical authority and of all truth whatsoever, the emphasis on investigation rather than on truth.

Should one wish to make a final statement on Kundera and postmodernism, one could argue that --in Kundera at least-- there is a more playful incorporation of Nietzschean premises into the works of literature. Nietzsche is no longer dealt with as an authority in a liberating philosophy of life, but as an influence that stimulates thought and reflection. Nietzsche does not offer the imperative truth of a Dionysian way of life, but instead a plurality of all kinds of truths, some of which are accepted and some of which rejected. Kundera seems to take from Nietzsche whatever seems relevant to his own personal set of experiences. Once again, this does not necessarily turn him into a post-Nietzschean writer. If anything, Kundera would speak of himself as part of a tradition initiated by authors such as Cervantes and Rabelais. What the selective use of Nietzsche does accomplish, however, is that it makes of Kundera an author who uses Nietzsche for his own personal exploration of the world. Nietzsche is used, that is, toyed with and approached from different angles for the purpose of the investigation as well as for the joy of conducting it, rather than upheld as a standard to which one either complies or does not comply.

CHAPTER SIX

DERRIDA AND NIETZSCHE: THE CONSISTENCY OF METHOD AND THE POSTPONEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

Like that fancied ether, which, in default of sensible matter, fills up the measure of the universe (...) Bentham

The difficulty of Derrida's Nietzsche configuration

It is no easy task to define Derrida's conception of Nietzsche. Ernst Behler, in his *Derrida-Nietzsche, Nietzsche-Derrida*, a study the title of which suggests a dialogue and as such is indicative of Behler's assumption that Derrida's Nietzsche figures in a philosophical configuration that is thoroughly Derrida's own, argues that Derrida's Nietzsche appears to be rather "light" and "elusive": "[i]m Vergleich mit der voluminösen seinsgeschichtlichen Auslegung Nietzsches erscheint Derridas Nietzsche sogar ungemein leicht und flüchtig" (13). By "Auslegung" (ex-planation) in this quotation Behler means Heidegger's Nietzsche interpretation; to indicate Derrida's handling of Nietzsche he uses the more neutral "Nietzschelektüre" (13). Derrida's Nietzsche interpretation, according to Behler, is a reading, or perhaps rather a set of different readings, of Nietzsche, and not a comprehensive explanation.[1]

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[1] Ernst Behler: *Derrida-Nietzsche, Nietzsche-Derrida*. München (u.a.): Ferdinand Schöningh, 1988. Behler states: „Das seinsgeschichtliche und metaphysikgeschichtliche Lesen Nietzsches war Heideggers Sache. Die These von Nietzsche als dem letzten Metaphysiker oder dem letzten Philosophen ergab sich konsequent aus einer solchen Lektüre. Derrida geht Nietzsche von einer strukturalistischen, grammatologischen, aber auch biographischen Analyse seines Textes aus an. Er will Nietzsche nicht lesen, um ihn irgendwo hineinzustellen oder ihm irgendwo seinen Platz anzuweisen, sondern um seinen Text zu erkunden. Die Anwendung von Begriffen wie lezter Metaphysiker oder letzter Philosoph erweisen sich von daher als absurd, wie auch ander Kategorisierungen an diesem Text zerschellen. Bei diesem grammatologischen, strukturalistischen, biographischen, aber absolut nicht seinsgeschichtlichen Zugang zu Nietzsche bezieht sich Derrida nicht auf eine Auswahl, eine Kompilation, eine Manipulation von Nietzsches Text wie *Der Wille*

It seems that one must agree. While referring to a more explicit passage on Nietzsche in Derrida's *De la Grammatologie*, Allan Megill states that "the original French is [nonetheless] written in the conditional mode [and that as such] the effect (...) is to cast into doubt the extent to which Derrida himself is committed to what he is saying" (268).[2] In this often quoted passage on Heidegger's alleged manipulation of the Nietzsche text, Derrida uses indeed the conditional form "aurait," a quotation which might have required the absence of all grammatical ambiguity: "(...) Nietzsche, loin de rester *simplement* (...) *dans* la métaphysique, aurait puissamment contribué à libérer le signifiant de sa dépendance ou de sa dérivation par rapport au logos et au concept connexe de vérité ou de signifié premier (...)" 31-2).[3]

Part of the difficulty in establishing Derrida's Nietzsche configuration in detail seems to be Derrida's attempt to provide an altogether different type of reading of Nietzsche. This would be a reason that, no doubt, situates itself beyond those that comply to the rules and norms of the metaphysical interpretive tradition. Derrida's Nietzsche interpretation, by definition, uses that of Heidegger as a foil. Yet, not even interpretations that herald Nietzsche's anti-metaphysical qualities do necessarily define Nietzsche as escaping this metaphysical tradition. In his *Nietzsche's French Legacy*, Alan Schrift speaks of Derrida['s] "use[...] [of] Nietzsche as an exemplar of undecidability to frustrate the logocentric longing to

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zur Macht, sondern besonders auf die beim philosophischen Lesen Nietzsches gewöhnlich ausgelassenen konfigurativen, ironischen Schriften der indirekten Mitteilung, die Nietzsche noch selber veröffentlicht hat (...)" (13).

[2] Allan Megill: *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida*. Berkeley (a.o.): University of California Press, 1985.

choose between one or the other alternative within a fixed binary opposition" (25).[4]

Yet, beyond the rather elusive nature of the conception and characterization of Nietzsche, there is in Derrida a consistency of method of how to deal with Nietzsche. If Derrida abstains from explicitly rendering what Nietzsche is trying to say, there is nonetheless a quite consistent approach in Derrida to Nietzsche's texts. Derrida's handling of Nietzsche is programmatic (pro*grammat*ic?). Behler, for instance, in my opinion, fails to make this point sufficiently clear.

Derrida's method in handling Nietzsche's writing ('method' in quotation marks because ultimately the method, as Derrida explains it, is one beyond metaphysical interpretation in that it is meant to unveil the (in Derrida's view) false presuppositions of rigid methodological practices) is given or rendered by the Nietzsche text itself. In *De la Grammatologie*, Derrida argues that Nietzsche's text "appelle un autre type de lecture" (32-39).

Thus, if Derrida postpones (defers?) understanding of Nietzsche, in contrast, for instance, to Heidegger's *Aus-legung*, then the 'method' is all we have. In fact, all we have is the method as it is com*pell*ed by Nietzsche's text itself. Derrida's Nietzsche conception is the method through which he 'tackles' the Nietzsche text: method and conception are intricately linked, and the method may be as close as we can get to the nature of Derrida's Nietzsche conception.

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[3] Jacques Derrida: *De la Grammatologie*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1967.
[4] Alan D. Schrift: *Nietzsche's French Legacy: A Genealogy of Poststructuralism*. New York, London: Routledge, 1995.

Our analysis will thus have an empirical point of departure in that it will focus on method in Derrida's Nietzsche rather than on the hermeneutic question of its content. If Derrida's Nietzsche conception is closely related to the way in which he handles the Nietzsche text (it both com*pel*s and *plea*ds a different treatment), then through or beyond the method will emerge a better picture of the conception. In the following, I intend to investigate whether Derrida's Nietzsche will yield anything more than this method, or whether perhaps for Derrida the method is all that Nietzsche *can* yield.

I will thus focus on those texts in which Derrida explicitly speaks of Nietzsche, that is, explicit in terms of method. I will refrain from the attempt to answer the larger question of a Nietzschean influence on, or presence in, Derrida. Even though it is clear, in Schrift's view at least, that "Friedrich Nietzsche stands as one of the central figures to whom Jacques Derrida traces his own intellectual genealogy" (9). Limiting ourselves to those explicit texts on Nietzsche, in my opinion, will provide us with a more exclusive or privileged insight into how Derrida sees Nietzsche, as opposed to the question of how he makes use of Nietzsche. A limitation of texts also seems to make this project of a comparison between Nietzsche and Derrida feasible.

Behler distinguishes three texts in which Derrida focuses more explicitly on Nietzsche: (1) *Eperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche*, (2) *Otobiographies. L'enseignement de Nietzsche et la politique du nom propre* and (3) "Die Unterschriften interpretieren (Nietzsche/Heidegger)." The interesting point to make in relation to these texts is that all three originated as lectures at conferences, forums and round-tables. It is as if Derrida wishes his texts to be discussed, that is, as an oral and dynamic exercise to establish the text's multiple meanings, rather than to be merely read. Texts that are rendered at conferences and forums never just stand by themselves. Their authority is always compromised by the context in which these texts are rendered.

Schrift in this respect speaks of a "few brief texts 'on' Nietzsche" (11), yet brevity can be no conclusive criterion for Derrida to evaluate the power and authority of an argument or text.

The second point to make about these texts is that they deviate, in both appearance and content, from the usual criticism on Nietzsche. References to Nietzsche vary from quotations on women to those on umbrellas, to fathers and to mothers. The Nietzsche texts Derrida refers to in these lectures range from works such as *Zarathustra* to those of *Genealogie der Moral* and *Ecce Homo*. Yet the particular sections are the more intricate, enigmatic and generally neglected parts. Once again, beyond the method there will emerge a certain Nietzschean configuration: every choice Derrida makes to emphasize something in Nietzsche has a certain ideological (that is, methodological) implication. Derrida's emphasis on *Ecce Homo* in his lecture on autobiography, for instance, reflects (or hides?) a previous choice, that is, the reevaluation of a text that is generally neglected in the large body of Nietzsche criticism. His preference for the aphoristic writings of Nietzsche's corpus, at the very least, points at a concern with the trans-metaphysical quality of Nietzsche's thought and writing.

In the following, I will start off with an example of a Derridean method. I will speak of Jeremy Bentham, this late eighteenth century founder of a systematic utilitarian ideology.[5] Though Derrida does not explicitly refer to this thinker, I will attempt to demonstrate how Bentham fits the criteria of a Derridean type of textual investigation. Bentham's principal text, in its attempt to conceal points of conflict in the creation of the argument itself, can be said to resemble Derrida's conception of Heidegger's *Nietzsche*. The latter, when properly read, according to Derrida, reveals its metaphysical manipulation of the Nietzsche text. Derrida, much the same as our analysis on Bentham, focuses in Heidegger's Nietzsche interpretation on points of incongruity and instances of argumentative silence.[6]

Nietzsche, however, more than once, speaks of Bentham, and of the English utilitarianists in general. Though he condemns their, in his view, simplistic conception of human life, he allows for an intriguing paradox to stand at the basis of their thought.

I will also identify Derrida's method of a revalorization of marginal textual parts as a Nietzschean model, and will attempt to demonstrate that Derrida holds this model as an alternative to the metaphysical interpretive tradition.

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[5] Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) is considered to be the father of utilitarianism. The movement has two major proponents, Bentham and John Stuart Mill, yet Bentham is responsible for a more systematic definition of utilitarianism. For utilitarianism, the righteousness of an action lies within its utility.

The Nietzschean model

The radical Bentham: a parenthesis
Bentham as an illustration of the Nietzschean generated method in Derrida

The preface and footnote as places of resistance

My analysis of Nietzsche and Derrida (Nietzsche in Derrida and Derrida in Nietzsche) proceeds through Bentham, this eighteenth century English thinker, father of utilitarianism and predecessor of John Stuart Mill. Bentham: instructor of the "principle of utility," of pain and pleasure as the "sovereign masters" under which "governance [in Bentham's own words] nature has placed mankind."

On the first page of his preface to *The Principles of Morals and Legislation*[7], Bentham explains the reasons that underlie the delayed publication of pages written and conceived as many as nine years prior to their actual appearance (Coates and Whites in their *The Ordeal of Liberal Humanism* speak of his "long-awaited book" (11)).[8] Bentham states:

> The body of the work had received its completion according to the then present extent of the author's views, when, in the investigation of some flaws he had discovered, he found himself unexpectedly entangled in an unsuspected corner of the metaphysical maze. A suspension, at first not apprehended to be more than a temporary one, necessarily ensued: suspension brought on coolness, and coolness, aided by other concurrent causes, ripened into disgust (vii).

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[6] In his study, entitled *De la Grammatologie*, Derrida suggests to "give up entirely" the Nietzsche text to Heidegger's interpretation of it so as to have the Nietzsche text reveal itself in its "total strangeness" (33). See footnote 11.
[7] New York: Prometheus Books, 1988.

This quote is remarkable not so much because in it Bentham openly speaks of insufficiencies in his texts, theory or argument, which is often nothing more than a rhetorical convention, but because the quote hints at the discovery of something which is either unresolvable or, if not, resolvable with the utmost difficulty. Bentham's self-justifying words refer to an impasse (a "suspension") reached in the thought experiment he is conducting. The quote indicates perhaps not the nature of the contentious point in the experiment, but it does indicate that there was one. Thought and understanding are suspended, if only for a limited period of time, by something which has eluded understanding.

In this context, our knowledge of the initial "flaws" themselves is less important than the observation of this "suspension" of thought. Bentham speaks of "[t]he inordinate length of some of the chapters, the apparent inutilitity of others, and the dry metaphysical turn of the whole, [as] suggest[ing] an apprehension, that, if published (...), the work would contend under great disadvantage for any chance (...) of being read, and consequently of being of use" (vii). The suspension of thought Bentham is referring to, however, is something different --it suggests a deadlock point of logical understanding.

There are a few more things we can establish about the nature of the intellectual impasse. Bentham speaks of the "metaphysical maze" and of the fact that he is or was "entangled" in it. The metaphor of the maze is interesting because it refers to a conception of reality as a labyrinth, a web or a swamp in which one is either lost or caught.

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[8] W.H. Coates & H.V. White: *The Ordeal of Liberal Humanism: an Intellectual History of Liberal*

The way in which the entanglement is described is no less significant. The "unexpected" and "unsuspected" nature of the failure to make any intellectual advancement at the point he is referring to suggest the revelation not so much of something radically new as of something which had not occurred to him before because of its apparent or deceptive simplicity. The "coolness" and the "disgust" may hint at the feeling that what he had written thus far had been superseded by this new insight.

A more explicit description of the nature of the intellectual impasse is given only towards the end of the preface. Again, Bentham speaks of his initial project in terms of a defeat, yet here he is much more specific about the reasons:

> [t]he discovery of [the as yet unspecified difficulties] was produced by the attempt to solve the [following] questions: *Wherein consisted the identity and completeness of law? What the distinction, and where the separation, between a* penal *and a* civil *law? What the distinction, and where the separation, between the* penal *and* other branches *of* the law? (xiv) (italics are Bentham's).

It is clear from this quotation in the preface to *The Principles* that Bentham's concern is a metaphysical concern over substance. Bentham speaks of concepts such as "identity," "completeness," "distinction" and "separation," thus demonstrating his preoccupation with essence, and, in this particular case, with the essence of law. The concern, judging from this passage, is one with the principle underlying the manifestation, --with permanent truth behind changing

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Humanism. Vol. 2. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966-70.

appearances and with the thing-in-itself. At stake is the difficulty of defining the essence of law, that is, that which remains true and applicable at all times and for all, and, as we will argue, it is the shimmering awareness in Bentham that no such essence and universality may exist. For Bentham, the difficulty of Common law precisely lies within the absence of a guiding principle on which it is based and by which the law itself is justified:

> Common law, as it styles itself in England, judiciary law, as it might more aptly be styled every where, that fictitious composition which has no known person for its author, no known assemblage of words for its substance, forms every where the main body of the legal fabric: like that fancied ether, which, in default of sensible matter, fills up the measure of the universe. Shreds and scraps of real law, stuck upon that imaginary ground, compose the furniture of every national code (xv).

The indeterminate essence of the ethereal substance becomes a metaphor for the intricate construct of the law. At stake here are the values human beings hang on to. In his chapter on the "principle of utility," Bentham poses the following question: "[i]s it possible for a man to move the earth? Yes; but he must first find out another earth to stand upon" (5). Bentham's quest is much like Descartes': the attempt to arrive at absolute truth, however small or modest, by leaving behind all speculation. The quotation on Common law demonstrates Bentham's concern with the law's "fictitious" nature. The words conceal the awareness that the law may very well be nothing more than what is defined as such. The principle of utility is Bentham's reclaimed metaphysical territory, the gates of essence that seal him off from the vortex of a 'groundless' nihilism. In the main text of *The Principles*, Bentham starts off with the following words:

> Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it. In words a man may pretend to abjure their empire: but in reality he will remain subject to it all the while. The *principle of utility* recognizes this subjection, and assumes it for the foundation of that system, the object of which is to rear the fabric of felicity by the hands of reason and of law. Systems which attempt to question it, deal in sounds instead of sense, in caprice instead of reason, in darkness instead of light (1-2).

The quote clearly demonstrates to what extent Bentham has metaphysically anchored his world. The essence of human kind is the striving for pleasure, and all action is explained in terms of this clear-cut division between pleasure and pain, good and bad. "Sound," "caprice" and "darkness" symbolize his fear of the continued questioning of principle, reason and law. Bentham's world is foremost an orderly world, where questions, however haunting, will ultimately be answered.

And yet, as previously observed, there is the shadow of uncertainty and doubt that looms over the central text, and which finds its main expression in the textual asides, the footnotes and the preface. A writer may control language and shape an argument; he or she cannot control meaning. Meaning escapes the tight structure of the argument.

Of particular interest here is Bentham's intuitive distrust of figurative speech as opposed to a more literal and therefore supposedly more authentic type of language. More than once, Bentham underlines the inefficiency of language, and its incapacity to truthfully describe reality or represent truth. In his first chapter on the principle of utility Bentham expresses his impatience with figurative speech: "But enough of metaphor and declamation: it is not by such means that moral science is to be improved" (2). On the intricate distinction between "immediate and remote motives" underlying human action, Bentham establishes in one of his footnotes: "Language is materially deficient, in not enabling us to distinguish with precision between existence as opposed to unreality and present existence as opposed to past" (101).

We may conclude this section by establishing that Bentham's intuitive skepticism towards language and a knowable absolute reality leads a life of its own. As an alternative discourse to the central argument, his skepticism runs parallel with the main text, subverting and questioning it on occasion. The skepticism itself is modern: given his mistrust of metaphor and rhetorical language there is in Bentham a sense of language having the power to shape reality instead of just simply describing it. To be sure, reality for Bentham must ultimately be reducible to a set of principles, laws and truths which are universal and to which human beings can have access. Yet, Bentham's doubt may be more radical than he would care for given his account of an increasingly complex reality in which language is but an inherently deficient tool. Bentham's skepticism may be rigorously kept in check, nonetheless it has the potential to always question, negate and subvert. About the difficulty of determining the exact nature of the many motives underlying human action, Bentham says in one of his footnotes:

> Whether it be the expectation of being burnt, or the pain that accompanies that expectation, that is the immediate internal motive spoken of, may be difficult to determine. It may even be questioned, perhaps, whether they are distinct entities. Both questions, however, seem to be mere questions of words, and the solution of them altogether immaterial. Even the other kinds of motives, though for some purpose they demand a separate consideration, are, however, so intimately allied, that it will often be scarce practicable, and not always material, to avoid confounding them, as they have always hitherto been confounded (100).

Of particular importance in this quotation, as in others, is Bentham's emphasis on the complexity of reality, and in this particular case, on the impossibility of ultimately making a clear distinction between the different motives. For Bentham, truth may exist yet the simple truth does not. In the preface he states: "[Truths] are not to be forced into detached and general propositions, unencumbered with explanations and exceptions. They will not compress themselves into epigrams. They recoil from the tongue and the pen of the declaimer. They flourish not in the same soil with sentiment. They grow among thorns; and are not to be plucked, like daisies, by infants as they run" (preface xvi).

Bentham's case: two arguments: the argument proper and the counter-argument

Derrida's interpretive method

With this section on Bentham I have attempted to demonstrate (and this is the reason for a more elaborate discussion) that in *The Principles of Morals and Legislation* there are two arguments, one principal argument and one that has the tendency to subvert it. The specificity of our analysis, which takes as its point of departure what is suppressed rather than exhibited, reveals that the latter, much more critical and tentative discourse remains largely concealed: its presence has to be intricately established, and this beyond the obvious one. For most critics, Bentham's *The Principles* is focused around one single and clear argument.

As previously mentioned, the main argument is metaphysical. Bentham explains human behaviour in terms of the laws of pleasure and pain; the principle of utility becomes the 'grounding' principle of morals and legislation. "The standard of right and wrong" is defined in terms of an intrinsic standard.

The second argument is counter-argumentative: it breaks down metaphysical assumptions. It reveals a certain epistemological skepticism in that it expresses reservations about language and the description of reality. It is a skepticism that may embarrass the author despite himself.

Of importance for our analysis is the fact that the disintegration of metaphysical truths, as we have seen, occurs almost exclusively in Bentham's preface and footnotes, that is, places of resistance to the metaphysically anchored argument of the central text. Bentham's preface, in particular, is interesting in that it allows the reader a first-hand experience of the philosopher's doubts and limitations while writing the book. Bentham, in the preface, speaks of himself in the third person singular as if to acknowledge the different personalities that must be inscribed in the text as a whole. It is significant that these doubts and limitations figure in the book's preface, which, taken by itself, seems so marginal to the text as a whole.

Yet, the preface, by its very nature, as we will see, is something ambiguous --it both belongs and does not belong to the text it is said to introduce. The preface is not part of the text proper, and because of this it is also more liable to reflect the limitations of the argument. It allows the author more freedom to indicate the difficulties or the issues that are contentious. Issues, which by themselves, if treated in the main text, would obstruct the flow of the argument.

In this sense, then, the preface, as well as the footnote, may constitute a type of counter-argument or sub-discourse, which, because of its marginal importance to the text proper, is often more critical towards the argument than the text itself. In the preface, the author is taken off guard, since here he or she no longer feels the restrictions imposed by the main text. In the previous section, I have attempted to demonstrate that understanding the 'Bentham' of *The Principles*, in which surfaces a more radical Bentham, is paying attention to those places of textual resistance.

In this context, it is interesting to note that Nietzsche, himself, allows for a certain degree of truth-unveiling radicalism in Bentham. This occurs despite the author himself, that is, despite Bentham's attempt to establish truth rather than to question it, though Nietzsche does not use the same method to arrive at this conclusion. In his *Jenseits*, Nietzsche points out the English utilitarianists' --and also Bentham's-- almost 'immoral' attempt to question morality as rigorously as they do: "[i]st ein Moralist nicht das Gegenstück eines Puritaners? Nämlich als ein Denker, der die Moral als fragwürdig, fragezeichenwürdig, kurz als Problem nimmt? Sollte moralisieren nicht -- unmoralisch sein?" (*KSA*, V, 164).[9]

Our analysis of Bentham, beyond the philosopher's interesting case itself, is an illustration of a 'Derridean' interpretive method. As its point of departure, it focuses on those places in the text where the argument takes a halt, where thought is suspended, if only for a short while, where the author is taken off guard, and where, in some ways, he is freer to express himself, that is, freed from the argumentative rigours of the main text. For Derrida (and also Nietzsche), the text (as well as the author) represses digressions it cannot make disappear. Nietzsche's observation of the utilitarian paradox indicates that Bentham, among others, represses a certain complexity of thought.

In his few analyses of Nietzsche, as in those of Hegel and Heidegger, for instance, Derrida focuses on textual 'asides' (digressions) such as the preface, the exergue, the quotation marks, the hyphen, the 'disseminated' theme, the enigmatic scribble taken from the *Nachlaß*. And the method entails, as in the case of

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[9] Nietzsche indicates in utilitarianists a lack of consistency and courage to push the utilitarianist argument to its logical end: „(...) es fehlt [bei den englischen Utilitariern] auch nicht an geheimer

Bentham, the importance of those traditionally peripheral textual topoï. In fact, if at all, the text's meaning (that is, purpose, fullness, realization of text as text) must reside in those very marginal and borderline places, which, paradoxically enough, resist the establishing of meaning and truth in the traditional sense. If anything, the method establishes, as it does in Bentham's case, the degree of authenticity and self-criticism the thinker allows for in the organization of his argument. For Derrida and Nietzsche, the text is a place of struggle and of conflict: the wish for metaphysical truth in thinkers, for instance, Derrida's method seems to imply, is almost always subverted by skepticism and doubt, no matter how strongly the wish is put forward in the text. The prerequisite for a text to be regarded as text, and to function as such, is this situation of conflict.

Derrida explicitly turns the preface into a problematic.[10] In the first text of his collection of papers entitled *La Dissémination*,[11] which text, Derrida insists, is not a preface in the conventional sense, Derrida indicates the special and paradoxical status of the preface: though meant to disappear after having introduced ("présent[é]" and "préc[édé]" (14)) the concept or material itself (a preface is meant to be forgotten once it is read), the preface leaves behind a trace ("une marque d'effacement"), that is, an indissoluble remainder and reminder that somehow affect the text the preface is said to introduce ("un *reste* qui s'ajoute au texte subséquent et ne s'y laisse plus tout à fait résumer" (14)). Derrida insists:

Abwehr von Gewissensbissen, an denen billigerweise eine Rasse von ehemaligen Puritanern bei aller wissenschaftlichen Befassung mit Moral leiden wird" (*KSA*, V, 164).

[10] It is interesting to note, in this context, that Derrida's (auto-)biography (*Jacques Derrida par Geoffrey Bennington et Jacques Derrida*. Ed. du Seuil, 1991) contains two different texts, the main

> (...) ce reste d'écriture [the preface, JFW] demeure antérieur et extérieur au développement du contenu qu'il annonce. Précédant ce qui doit pouvoir se présenter soi-même, il tombe comme une écorce vide et un déchet formel, moment de la sécheresse ou du bavardage, parfois l'un et l'autre ensemble. D'un point de vue qui [est] (...) celui de la science de la logique, Hegel disqualifie ainsi la préface. L'exposition philosophique a pour essence de pouvoir et de devoir se passer de préface (15).

Derrida, in this passage, speaks of the preface in terms of "écorce," "déchet," "sécheresse" and "bavardage." At another point, he speaks of a "lieu d'une causerie" (16). The preface that introduces philosophy proper is nothing more than useless "babble," "chatter," "chit-chat." It is waste, residue, trash. Derrida quotes Hegel when saying that pure philosophy does not and should not need any preliminary remarks in the form of a preface. Philosophical exposition, according to Hegel, is the expression of 'the thing itself,' that is, the presentation and *re*presentation of *die Sache selbst*, and any prefatory comments cannot but obscure the revelation or manifestation of this truth and essence:

> [l]a nécessité intérieure que le savoir soit science (*das Wissen Wissenschaft sei*) réside dans sa nature, et l'explication satisfaisante de ce point ne fait qu'un avec la présentation (*Darstellung*) de la philosophie même (quoted from the preface (!) of Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes*) (16).

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text and a long, extended footnote. While Bennington is responsible for the main argument, Derrida writes his own story in the form of a long footnote.

Yet, waste and babble are never just negative in Derrida, or without importance. In fact, Derrida's entire project focuses on a revaluation of what is considered to be marginal. Derrida defines the preface not so much as preceding the philosophical exposition, but as something that follows it. A writer writes his preface after having finished the book. Or, to be more precise, as something which is always already a part of the philosophical 'moment' taking place in the main text. Derrida poses the following rhetorical questions: "(...) le prologue est-il déjà, au-delà de lui-même, emporté dans le mouvement qui se tient devant lui et qui ne paraît le suivre que pour l'avoir en vérité précédé? La préface n'est-elle pas à la fois niée et intériorisée dans la présentation de la philosophie par elle-même (...)?"

The prologue may be 'waste' in the sense that it contains thoughts and ideas that do not directly concern and support the so-called "essentialité philosophique" of the main text. Yet, the fact remains also that these thoughts and ideas, which turn the notion of textual essence made manifest into a problematic, are, strictly speaking, no less important to the matter of the main argument than the argument of the main text itself. The preface often contains what is excluded in the argument and explains the reasons for this exclusion. The author and thinker represses these interfering thoughts and ideas, yet cannot make them entirely disappear. Strictly speaking, for Derrida, the text contains no babble or waste proper, be it the preface or any other textual topos. To be more precise: babble and waste is all there is. If the main text cannot be the full manifestation of 'truth in progress' (for Derrida, Hegel's notion of a representation of the

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[11] Jacques Derrida: *La Dissémination*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972.

"essentialité philosophique" [*von der Sache selbst*] simply does not exist), then, in some way, the preface will be all there is. Neither the main text nor the preface can state 'the thing itself' and thus the main text must become the preface to another text. In a passage which I read as a re-valorization of the preface as waste, Derrida states:

> (...) si du prolégomène [the preface, JFW] une fois inscrit et tissé, quelque chose ne se laissait plus relever au cours de la présentation philosophique, serait-ce nécessairement pour prendre la forme de la *tombée*? Et qu'en est-il de la tombée? Ne pourrait-on la lire autrement que comme la déjection de l'essentialité philosophique, non certes pour l'en relever mais pour apprendre à compter autrement avec elle?[12]

Derrida uses the difficult verb "relever" to indicate that the preface, or to be more precise, something *of* or *in* the preface, does not allow itself --literally-- to be "lifted up": something prefatorial, in Derrida's view, cannot be "taken along" by the flow or movement of the philosophical manifestation. Barbara Johnson, in her English translation, uses for "relever" the English verb "sublate," thus focusing in her translation on the concept of something "carried away" or "along." *Webster*'s tells us that "sublate" is related to the Latin verb "ferre" which means "to carry." Something must stay. There emerges a void, once the preface is read or the thoughts it contains carefully relegated to the margin at the moment of writing, that somehow subverts the power and flow of the metaphysical argument. There is an impossibility to sublimate what remains of the preface.[13]

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[12] The English translation will be helpful with this difficult passage: „But if something were to remain of the prolegomenon once inscribed and interwoven, something that would not allow itself to be sublated (...) in the course of the philosophical presentation, would that something necessarily take the form of that which falls away? And what about such a fall? Couldn't it be read otherwise than as the excrement of philosophical essentiality --not in order to sublate it back into the latter, of course, but in order to learn to take it differently into account?“ (Tr.: Barbara Johnson, 1981, 11).

Megill, in this context of a revitalized marginal textual topos, speaks of "Derrida's own (...) strategy" in terms of a "perpetual withholding operation" (271). The 'enfant terrible' of the textual family configuration is the preface in that the preface fully admits that it can never be the treatment of 'the thing itself.' The preface introduces, withholds, circulates around the question. It does not focus on it. While quoting from *Postcard* and the 1967 *Positions* interview, Megill states that "[a]ll Derrida's texts are prefatory; none comes to a disclosure of truth. To imagine a nonprefatory Derrida would be to imagine another, entirely different writer. (...) for the task of writing, in Derrida's view, is not to say something --to make a point and be done with it. On the contrary, the writing is its own justification. A logorrhea results, an immense outpouring of words around an unsayable center" (272).

In a section called "[t]he rule of four," Megill speaks of Derrida's enigmatic identification of the preface to "un texte quatrième" (33). Derrida's fourth text is a manifestation of what Derrida terms the process of'dissemination,' which, as a textual phenomenon, stands 'opposed' to polysemy in that the latter still implies the presence of the (stable) signified. The preface, because it moves beyond the dialectical process of establishing meaning, refrains from the establishing of meaning itself. As a movement of 'four,' it does not support, or contradict the argument, or even negate its negation; all these would (inevitably) inscribe the preface in either the argument, the counter-argument or, again, in the argument as a negation of the latter. This final negation would be equal to the affirmation of the first. Rather, it questions the text, and presents or reveals the text and itself as text rather than as truth or the manifestation thereof. The preface situates the main text in a specific time frame. It also exposes the limitations of this text, both as truth and otherwise. The preface is a constant reminder of the text's inability to capture the truth.

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[13] Reference should be made to the proceedings of a conference held at the University of Alberta in 1987 on prefaces and manifestoes (Ed. E.D. Blodgett and A.G. Purdy, Research Institute for

The preface as a 'moment' in which evolves this process of dissemination, that is, the dispersal or the shattering of fixed meaning, opens up the space of what Derrida terms 'différance,' this play of signifiers without signifieds. What emerges in the text is a plurality of words without identifiable concepts --a conception of being merely as being, that is, beyond essence. The preface presents itself as a textual aporia: it cannot state or expose the truth that it must necessarily introduce. It must both 'speak' and refrain from 'speaking.' If the preface does not subvert the argument itself --after all, the argument is still readable as argument--, then it creates room for this subversion. Megill states:

> (...) slouching onto the scene comes the Derridean four [the manifestation of the preface, JFW], which is the „four" (...) of a dialectical triangle opened to form a fourth side, a disreputable, upsetting four, one that absolutely refuses to behave. The possibility of a fourth moment of the dialectic destroys the whole dialectical

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Comparative Literature, 1990). In his foreword, Blodgett speaks of Derrida's conception of the preface as an "instrument of control," yet does the preface not also precisely escape it?

> machine. (...) The fourth moment of the dialectic is the deconstructive moment: position, negation, negation of the negation, deconstruction (...) (274).

Should we wish to accept this specific conception of the prologue, we may have to make explicit now that our previous definition of Bentham's preface as 'counter-argumentative' must be understood in terms of a move beyond dialectical resolution. Bentham's skepticism subverts and interrogates the text rather than that posit it or claim an alternative truth. His skepticism and doubt concurrent with the main text define the text as text rather than as a manifestation of truth. The text now appears without the reassuring presence of a signified.

Derrida's interpretive method: a Nietzschean method

Subversion and suspension

In the remaining part of this analysis, I will attempt to demonstrate that Derrida's method of focusing on the marginal parts of a text in order to interpret, understand or deconstruct it, based on the logic of his own argument, is in fact a Nietzschean method. Derrida makes this claim himself. In fact, my concern will be to demonstrate that, if anything, Derrida defines Nietzsche foremost as a thinker who brings forth a certain interpretive method to understand his own texts. And, as seems to be the case, to understand a plurality of others. Though, in this context, it should also be noted that the understanding of a text in Nietzsche may entail that it proposes a certain resistance to being understood, at least as this is traditionally conceived.

In his *Prophets of Extremity*, Megill speaks of Derrida's method in terms of a "literary-philosophical collage" which should be read as a "work of art" instead of a "philosophical or critical commentary." The quote reads:

> (...) by topographical stratagems, by extensive quotation, by the chopping up of passages, by recourse to dictionary definitions, and by word play of various kinds, Derrida creates a literary-philosophical collage. To attempt to read it as philosophical or critical commentary is silly. One must read it, rather, as a work of art -and more specifically as a postmodern work of art, designed not to reconstitute an order (...) in the mind of the reader/viewer but rather to generate an infinite free association (283).

Though we acknowledge this claim of a divergence from the philosophical, critical tradition, it seems to us at this point that the specificity of Derrida lies in his attempt to make his texts, and this in accordance with Nietzsche's, defy all categorization, even as a work of art to be admired, for instance, by the spectator. Derrida's 'Nietzschean' reading strategy for reading Nietzsche's text is a focus on those elements which subvert meaning, understanding and categorization. The text somehow makes explicit that there is no pure intention behind the text. Derrida's texts, some texts more than others, follow a similar path. It appears that both Derrida and Nietzsche define the process of understanding in terms of a domestication, and that their attempt is that of a postponement of the intellectual grasp: in one of his prefaces, Nietzsche speaks of the "wounding" quality of his *Zarathustra* in relation to the reader's ability to understand it. Nietzsche uses the German verb 'verwunden' and defines this (temporary) lack of understanding as a prerequisite for grasping his *Zarathustra*: no reader will understand the book who hasn't been hurt by it at some point. Both Derrida's and Nietzsche's texts, with their problematic of an inflated marginality, cause a certain panic in the reader rather than bring enjoyment. Their texts, it seems to me Derrida wishes to indicate, create silence rather than generate in the mind of the reader a play of "infinite free association."

Our point of departure in this particular section, then, will be that the Nietzsche text yields a certain method for reading and understanding, at an initial stage, the Nietzsche text itself. Our intention here is to show how Derrida makes this claim rather than to investigate the validity of such an assertion.

In his *De la Grammatologie*, Derrida speaks of the remarkable way in which he wishes to "save Nietzsche['s text] from a Heideggerian-type of interpretation," that is, from an ontological reading of Nietzsche. Instead of pointing out the invalidity of Heidegger's interpretation or proposing an alternative one, Derrida suggests, as he terms it himself, to "give up [Nietzsche's texts] entirely" to Heidegger's reading of it. The Nietzsche text will reveal itself in its "strangeness." Derrida's quotation reads:

> Peut-être ne faut-il donc pas soustraire Nietzsche à la lecture heideggerienne mais au contraire l'y offrir totalement, souscrire sans réserve à cette interprétation; d'une certaine manière et jusqu'au point où le contenu du discours nietzschéen étant à peu près perdu pour la question de l'être, sa forme retrouve son étrangeté absolue, où son texte enfin appelle un autre type de lecture, plus fidèle à son type d'écriture (...) (32-3).[14]

The main thought behind this quotation is the fact that Nietzsche's text itself "calls for" and "compels" a different and more authentic type of reading, that is, one that is closer to his text. The 'Heideggerian' interpretation, because of its persistent concern with truth, turns the Nietzsche text into a metaphysical search for essence, even if some of these interpretations deny Nietzsche's concern with essence as such. Heidegger's reading defines and creates the Nietzsche text. Yet, the definition, in Derrida's view, is like clothes that do not fit. Derrida's idea of a text rendering its own keys for interpretation reminds one of Nietzsche's wish to express thought beyond the limiting effects of language.

"Otobiographies":

Ecce Homo, its preface, riddle, motto, exergue and *Nachlaß*

At this point in our analysis, we should return to Derrida's Nietzsche texts themselves. If the Nietzsche text compels a certain reading, which at this point remains implicit in Derrida, then Derrida's approach to Nietzsche will reveal what this self-yielding reading strategy entails.

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[14] The quote further reads: „Nietzsche a écrit ce qu'il a écrit. Il a écrit que l'écriture --et d'abord la sienne-- n'est pas originairement assujettie au logos et à la vérité. Et que cet assujettissement est

In his article entitled "Otobiographies: L'enseignement de Nietzsche et la politique du nom propre," Derrida indicates the "point of departure" of his analysis:

> Je (...) lirai [Nietzsche] à partir de ce qui dit ou se dit *Ecce Homo* (...), et „*Wie man wird, was man ist*", comment on devient ce qu'on est. Je lirai à partir de cette préface à *Ecce Homo* dont vous pourriez dire qu'elle est coextensive à tout l'oeuvre, si bien que tout l'oeuvre préface aussi *Ecce Homo* et se trouve répété dans ce qu'on nomme, au sens strict, la *Préface* de quelques pages à l'ouvrage intitulé *Ecce Homo*. (...) (45-6).[15]

It is interesting to see to what extent one of the first rationales in his paper on Nietzsche already indicates the nature of Derrida's method in handling the Nietzsche text. The least one can say is that Derrida's analysis focuses on a set of problematical points in Nietzsche. Derrida, as we learn from this quotation, chooses a work such as *Ecce Homo*, its exergue or sub-title (it is unclear which of the two applies best) and the preface. The argument that Derrida makes is no less significant: the preface to *Ecce Homo* is "coextensive" with the work in its entirety, the work in its entirety is repeated in the preface, and, as such, it is thus

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devenu au cours d'une époque dont il nous faudra déconstruire le sens" (33).

[15] „The point of my departure for my reading will be what says „Ecce Homo" or what says „Ecce Homo" of itself, as well as „Wie man wird, was man ist," how one becomes what one is. I shall start with the preface to *Ecce Homo* which is, you could say, coextensive with Nietzsche's entire oeuvre, so much so that the entire oeuvre also prefaces *Ecce Homo* and finds itself repeated in the few pages of what one calls, in the strict sense, the Preface to the work entitled *Ecce Homo*" (8).

also the preface to *Ecce Homo*. In whichever way one wishes to define Derrida's Nietzsche interpretation, it is anything but a conventional one.

Derrida's choice of *Ecce Homo* in his paper is the conscious choice of one of the more enigmatic works in the Nietzsche oeuvre. Usually defined as an 'autobiography with a difference,' that is, written by a thinker aware of the limitations of his own writing, *Ecce Homo*, for most critics, stands for the more incommensurable sides of a mentally degenerating philosopher. With chapter headings such as "Warum ich so weise bin," "Warum ich so klug bin" and "Warum ich so gute Bücher schreibe," *Ecce Homo* testifies for many to the megalomania and self-delusion of a thinker deprived of a sense of balance and moderation. Nietzsche writes *Ecce Homo* in 1888 just prior to his mental collapse. In his comments to the sixth volume of the *KSA* collection, Colli indicates:

> [de[r] plötzliche[...] Entschluß, eine Autobiographie zu schreiben] ist der Punkt, an dem Nietzsche den Kontakt zur Realität verliert. Es zeigt sich deutlich, daß, wer so fanatisch, so wütend seine Unzeitgemäßheit betont (...), seine Verbindung zur Gegenwart abbricht, allein, abgewiesen und beiseite geschoben zurückbleibt. Hier, wo Unzeitgemäßheit und Gegenwart für Nietzsche zu zwei miteinander unvereinbaren Positionen geworden sind, wo er den Abstand zwischen ihnen selbst ins Grenzenlose gesteigert hat, erliegt er der Halluzination von einer wundersamen Konvergenz. Er phantasiert, daß für sein Denken, für seine Person nunmehr die Zeitgemäßheit anbreche --aber darin ist er bereits nicht mehr zurechnungsfähig.[16]

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[16] The quotation continues as follows: „Und diese Trübung betrifft nicht nur die letzten Tage, unmittelbar vor dem Zusammenbruch, sondern den ganzen Turiner Herbst. Ende September 1888 spricht Nietzsche --nach Vollendung des *Antichrist*- von einem „Gesetz wider das Christenthum", und den Augenblick, in dem er dieses Gesetz erläßt, bezeichnet er als den Beginn einer neuen Ära der Weltgeschichte. Es handelt sich um eine politische Euphorie: In Nietzsches naiver Phantasie deutet das Politische auf den authentischen Bereich der Zeitgemäßheit, dessen, was verwirklicht, was von allen anerkannt ist. In ähnlicher Weise hält Nietzsche in den Briefen von Freunden und

Nietzsche's audacious opposition of himself to the "Crucified" towards the end of the book, his subsequent identification with Dionysos, the heralding of a new 'Nietzschean' era in the preface, and the disproportionate appraisal of his *Zarathustra* are all elements that are somehow difficult to take at face value. Nietzsche's tone on *Zarathustra*, it can be argued, is one of exaggerated superlatives: "[Zarathustra], mit einer Stimme über Jahrtausende hinweg, ist nicht nur das höchste Buch, das es giebt (...), es ist auch das *tiefste*, das aus dem innersten Reichthum der Wahrheit heraus geborene, ein unerschöpfliche Brunnen, in den kein Eimer hinabsteigt, ohne mit Gold und Güte gefüllt heraufzukommen" (*KSA*, 259).

If Derrida's choice of *Ecce Homo* is indicative of a preference for the neglected parts of Nietzsche's corpus (Derrida, himself, in certain contexts, speaks of *detritus*), his focus on the book's sub-title, preface and exergue, in the limited context of *Ecce Homo* itself, is even more indicative. The book's motto, "Wie man wird, was man ist," is a complex representation of a Nietzschean 'truth': how to become what one already is? 'Werden' (becoming), to our intuitive understanding, is compatible with the Nietzschean representation of being, yet the concept of 'Sein' compels our immediate suspicion. In Nietzsche, the word and concept 'S/sein' must somehow be read as appearing under the convention-subverting spell of the quotation mark.

Bekannten jedes Wort der Zustimmung, der Anerkennung für das Zeichen seines ausgebrochenen Ruhms, ja sogar für das eines großen historischen Umsturzes" (452-3).

Derrida uses this slogan, and the intricate conception of being of which it is indicative, in relation to the first few, enigmatic lines of the book's main text. Derrida quotes Nietzsche: "Das Glück meines Daseins, seine Einzigkeit vielleicht, liegt in seinem Verhängnis: ich bin, um es in Räthselform auszudrücken, als mein Vater bereits gestorben, als meine Mutter lebe ich noch und werde ich alt" (61-2; *KSA*, 264).

It is indicative, here too, that Derrida focuses on, and in fact starts off with, the "riddle" of Nietzsche's being and genealogical origins, that is, a section which defies logical understanding. In it, Derrida explains Nietzsche's "doppelte Herkunft" (double provenance) in terms of a dualism beyond metaphysics, that is, a dualism which is no longer represented by two opposites on the same pole. Derrida paraphrases Nietzsche:

> En tant que *je suis* mon père, je suis mort, je suis le mort et je suis la mort. En tant que *je suis* ma mère, je suis la vie qui persévère, le vivant, la vivante. Je suis mon père, ma mère et moi, et moi qui suis mon père ma mère et moi, mon fils et moi, la mort et la vie, le mort et la vivante, etc. (62).[17]

The "suis," here, is the conjugation of both "être" and "suivre" ("to be" and "to follow"). Derrida's play on the verb's ambiguous origin must reflect the desire to express something that escapes the identity-defining principles of language.

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[17] „Inasmuch as *I am and follow after* my father, I am the dead man and I am death. Inasmuch as *I am and follow after* my mother, I am life that perseveres, I am the living and the living feminine. I am my father, my mother, and me, and me who is my father my mother and me, my son and me, death and life, the dead man and the living feminine, and so on" (16).

Derrida, significantly enough, calls Nietzsche's double provenance the "unrepresentable" (16).

Derrida's intention, though obscured by the complexity of a confusing syntax, is to express a convergence (an "alliance" (17)) of the two sides that somehow maintain their separate status. There is no synthesis of the two into one single entity, but the ongoing possibility of the two sides revealing themselves at once: "(...) Et je connais, je suis les deux, il faudrait dire *le* deux, le duel ou le double, je connais ce que je suis, *le* deux, la vie le mort. Deux, c'est la vie le mort. Quand je dis: ne confondez pas, je suis *der und der*, c'est ça, le mort la vivante (65)."[18] [19]

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[18] „(...) I know and I am the both of them (one would have to read „the both“ as being in the singular), the dual or the double, I know what I am, the both, the two, life the dead (...). Two, and from them one gets life the dead. When I say „Do not mistake me for someone else, I am *der und der*,“ this is what I mean: the dead the living, the dead man the living feminine“ (17).

[19] In the context of this enigmatic status of *Ecce Homo*'s motto or sub-title, it is interesting to note that Derrida himself introduces the first chapter of his *De la Grammatologie* with a short reference, significantly enough, to Nietzsche. Derrida's passage is a reference to one of the many comments that Nietzsche has on Socrates: „Socrate, celui qui n'écrit pas. Nietzsche“ (15). The excerpt, which follows the book's „avertissement“ and „exergue“ (the 'warning' and 'exergue' must be textual symptoms of Derrida's reluctance to commence the exposition proper), is a quote taken from Nietzsche's *Nachlaß* (at least this seems to be the case, since Derrida does not make this explicit): in one of the Autumn 1869 *Nachlaß* fragments, Nietzsche indicates: „Socrates ist der ideale „Naseweise“: ein Ausdruck, der mit dem nöthigen Zartsinn aufgefaßt werden muß. Socrates als der „Nichtschreiber“: er will nichts mittheilen, sondern nur erfragen“ (*KSA*, 7, 17).

Yet, strictly speaking, it remains questionable whether Derrida's Nietzsche excerpt is a valid representation of the Nietzsche quote taken from the *Nachlaß*: Socrates may be the "one who does not write," in Nietzsche's case also, yet it remains unresolved whether Nietzsche's allegation, in this particular quote, is one of a fraudulent preference of speech over writing as Derrida seems to imply by having the excerpt introduce his first chapter. It should be noted, in this context, that Derrida's first chapter subverts the conventional preference of speech over writing. It is clear that the excerpt leads a life of its own: amputated from its original context, the excerpt or proverbial wisdom, also because of its concise appearance, is applicable to whatever new context it forces itself upon to function as host.

Questions as to the excerpt's status and authority, however, remain unresolved. It is unclear whether, and to what extent, Derrida distorts the excerpt's meaning (the Nietzsche fragment on which it is based is too short to determine with certainty Nietzsche's intention behind it), whether he uses it to demonstrate his argument (by focusing on an excerpt from Nietzsche's *Nachlaß*, Derrida may wish to demonstrate that though Heidegger uses the *Nachlaß* primarily to establish an ontology-oriented Nietzsche, the *Nachlaß* contains at least as much that contradicts

Just as the riddle turns Nietzsche's provenance into a problematic, the preface obscures the nature of the autobiography it introduces. Derrida's intricate elaboration makes a little more sense after our previous comments: the preface is the main text's residue, and, as such, no less important to the text as a whole than the main text is. If *Ecce Homo*, as an autobiographical work, is Nietzsche's final attempt to say who he is (in *Morgenröthe*, Nietzsche defines himself as a mole 'digging' for truth), then all works prior to *Ecce Homo* must function as the preface to this final book. *Ecce Homo*, then, is no ordinary attempt to establish Nietzsche's identity, but the attempt to establish an identity, either for himself or the recipient of his text, while reading, that is, being aware of, the previous works as preface. Nietzsche's work, then, in its entirety, indicates that the establishing of an identity in the conventional sense is impossible.

Of interest also, in the context of this inflated textual marginality, is the way in which Derrida approaches the text's exergue: *Ecce Homo* contains an enigmatically inserted page between the preface and the first chapter. Derrida indicates:

> Entre la préface, signée F.N., celle qui vient sous le titre, et le premier chapitre „Pourquoi je suis si sage“, une seule page: un hors-d'oeuvre, un exergue, page volante et dont le topos, comme la temporalité, disloque étrangement ce qui, dans notre tranquille assurance, nous voudrions comprendre comme le temps de la vie et le temps du récit

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Heidegger's argument), or whether, ultimately, in Derrida's case, the excerpt is used as a parody of excerpts.

> de la vie, de l'écriture de la vie par le vivant, bref le temps de l'autobiographie (53).[20]

Nietzsche's exergue contains a statement on the benevolence of life. Derrida's claim of a Nietzschean essence, if at all, is that it resides within this passing, though also eternally recurring, statement about the fullness of life. This essence, however, is no essence in the conventional sense, and Nietzsche's statement is made in the total realization that this life contains no essence as such. Derrida states: "(...) You will not understand anything of [Nietzsche's] life, nor of his life and works, until you hear the thought of the "yes, yes" given to this shadowless gift at the ripening high noon, beneath that division whose borders are inundated by sunlight: the overflowing cup of the sun" (13).[21] The exergue reads:

> An diesem vollkommnen Tage, wo Alles reift und nicht nur die Traube braun wird, fiel mir eben ein Sonnenblick auf mein Leben: ich sah rückwärts, ich sah hinaus, ich sah nie so viel und so gute Dinge auf einmal. Nicht umsonst begrub ich heute mein vierundvierzigstes Jahr, ich durfte es begraben, --was in ihm Leben war, ist gerettet, ist unsterblich. Die Umwerthung aller Werthe, die Dionysos-Dithyramben und, zur Erholung, die Götzendämmerung-- Alles Geschenke dieses Jahrs, sogar seines letzten Vierteljahrs! Wie sollte ich nicht meinem ganzen Leben dankbar sein? Und so erzähle ich mir mein Leben.

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[20] "Between the Preface signed F.N., which comes after the title, and the first chapter, „Why I Am So Wise," there is a single page. It is an outwork, an *hors-d'oeuvre*, an exergue or a flysheet whose topos, like (its) temporality, strangely dislocates the very thing that we, with our untroubled assurance, would like to think of as the time of life and the time of life's *récit*, of the writing of life by the living -in short, the time of autobiography" (11).

For Derrida, the exergue, as it is rendered in this quotation, is an expression of this fleeting moment of affirmation. It is an expression of something which is closest to the essence of Nietzsche's being, that is, Nietzsche is Nietzsche most when undergoing this state of a full affirmation. Yet, the affirmation is ungraspable: the moment in which it occurs passes in time, expressed by Derrida's use of the word "instant," and it cannot be captured by writing. For Derrida, Nietzsche's exergue, as an expression of the impossibility of rendering his true nature or being, subverts the autobiographical work *Ecce Homo* insofar as the latter is meant to describe or express the essence of Nietzsche's being. The moment of affirmation, which, in Derrida's view, is not really a moment in the proper sense of the word, is beyond ideology, truth, logic and argument: "ich sah rückwärts, ich sah hinaus, ich sah nie so viel und so gute Dinge auf einmal." Derrida states:

> Je ne lirai pas *Ecce Homo* avec vous. Je vous laisse avec cet avertissement sur le lieu de l'exergue, sur le pli qu'il forme, selon une limite inapparente: il n'y a plus d'ombre, et tous les énoncés, avant et après, à gauche et à droite, sont à la fois possibles (Nietzsche a tout dit, à peu près) et nécessairement contradictoires (il a dit les choses les plus incompatibles entre elles et il a dit qu'il les disait). (60).

The subsequent treatment of a text such as "Über die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten" is yet another example of that which is usually suppressed of

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[21] I have used the English quotations here. For the isolated excerpts, I will still be using the French.

the Nietzsche text. Derrida explicitly chooses to ignore the traditional approach, as he terms it himself, in favor of "this 'youthful work' as they say" (22).

The fact that the work, which is a compilation of (unfinished) lectures, is the product of a youthful mind, does not reduce its importance or authority. *Ecce Homo*, though Nietzsche's final published text, is not the culmination of knowledge in a thought experiment which evolves and perfects itself over time. In fact, rather than the texts reflecting a certain intellectual progress, there is, as Derrida insists, a certain continuity between them.

Of interest, in this context, is the fact that Derrida focuses on a work which Nietzsche himself refused to have published. Derrida indicates: "(...) Nietzsche expressly said that he would not want to see the text [these lectures] constitute published, even after his death. (...) [and even:] he "swore" not to publish these lectures" (24-5). The lecture series have been used for Nazi propaganda.

Yet, Derrida tells us that the *Zukunft* is not, as many a critic wishes to demonstrate, a misread lecture series. Derrida insists that the work allows for a different set of readings, that is, both a Nazi ideological one and one, for instance, that appears to be its opposite. What is of interest to Derrida is Nietzsche's construal of a text that allows for these different readings. The work, prior to whatever ideological message or truth it conveys, indicates that meaning, in general or in and of itself, cannot be stable or fixed. About a certain staging of the text as text, instead of as truth, Derrida states: "These lectures, given by an academic to academics and students on the subject of studies in the university and secondary school, amount to a theatrical infraction of the laws of genre and academicism" (25-6). Derrida suggests that Nietzsche's "theatrical infraction" of the laws of academia is intended.

The subversive element of Derrida's focus on this "product of a youthful mind" lies within the (implicit) claim that there is a continuity of thought in the large variety of Nietzsche's texts. The 'staging' of the text as text is a characteristic of both *Ecce Homo* and the *Zukunft*, two works that, at an initial stage appear, to many a critic, to be so different. Derrida's method, as a whole, denies that there is a selected core of Nietzschean texts that function as his masterpiece.

From this perspective, the *Zukunft* undermines whatever truth-claiming ambitions Nietzsche might have explored in the main body of texts.

***Spurs* and „Signatures“**
On women and umbrellas, the hyphen and the quotation mark
On Heidegger, his preface and its motto

No less than "Otobiographies," Derrida's focus in *Spurs* is on the more enigmatic elements of the Nietzsche text. If anything, *Spurs* is even more provocative in terms of the truth-subverting presence of the marginal in Nietzsche. In it, Derrida focuses among other things on the theme of woman, and this while being "aware [according to Behler] that Nietzsche's text in general is dominated by a "venomous anti-feminism"" (Derrida quotes from *Spurs*) (108).

Yet, one of Derrida's first statements on Nietzsche's conception of woman deals with the fluidity of the concept: "All of Nietzsche's investigations, and in particular those which concern woman, are coiled in the labyrinth of an ear" (43). Behler, in this context, states: "(...) it is difficult to determine Nietzsche's stance regarding th[e issue of woman] (...). For Nietzsche, woman is in general a mysterious, allegorical figure that represents life, truth, style, and many other things but possesses no definable identity, no ontological essence. The figure resists understanding and does not reveal "her grounds" (...)" (109).

Derrida, significantly enough, argues that Nietzsche's indeterminate conception of woman stands for the indeterminacy of his work as a whole. His point here, in my opinion, is that Nietzsche's woman both suspends truth and allows for it to be exposed, rather than simply subvert it. As such, Nietzsche's work is a text rather than an oeuvre, his writing *écriture* rather than philosophy:

> (...) tout ce qui va contraindre dans l'écriture de Nietzsche à la mise entre guillemets de la „vérité" (...), ce qui va donc *inscrire* la vérité, c'est (...): l'opération féminine. (...) si le style était (...) l'homme, l'écriture serait la femme (56).[22]

Derrida's "guillemets" are the Nietzschean quotation marks, and their effect is that of a suspension of truth. The latter is still there, yet it must, paradoxically enough, appear under the truth-subverting powers of these modifying marks. Derrida's focus on Nietzsche's treatment of woman, the quotation marks and the hyphen (Derrida treats the hyphen as it appears, for instance, in one of the aphorisms in Nietzsche's the *Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (60)) marks Derrida's wish to explain Nietzsche's oeuvre in terms of a suspension. The hyphen has the effect of a 'distancing' movement in the mind of the reader: the hyphen suspends understanding and it subverts, for instance, the will to define, to conclude, to preclude, in short, to cancel out all that is foreign to our mind. While commenting on the notion of *Distanz* in one of the Nietzsche aphorisms on woman, Derrida states: "The hyphen, a stylistic effect (...), suspends the word *Distanz*. The play of silhouettes which is created here by the hyphen's pirouette serves as a sort of warning to us to keep our distance from these multifarious veils and their shadowy dream of death" (49).

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[22] Nietzsche's writing is compelled to suspend truth between the tenter-hooks of quotation marks (...). Nietzsche's writing is an inscription of the truth. And such an inscription (...) is (...) the feminine „operation." (...) if style were a man (...), then writing would be a woman" (57).

In a section on the three positions that Nietzsche takes on woman, Derrida states: "In the instance of the third proposition (...), beyond the double negation of the first two, woman is recognized and affirmed as an affirmative power, a dissimulatress, an artist, a dionysiac. (...) She affirms herself (...)" (97). Derrida's Nietzschean woman, as a symbol of the Nietzsche text as a whole, is an enchantress of truth --truth is allowed to generate itself, yet only when it appears in suspension.

One of the most daring premises in Nietzsche criticism is the argument, in *Spurs*, that the enigmatic quality of Nietzsche's *Nachlaß* may very well stand for the oeuvre as a whole. Derrida reads one of the all too simple fragments of the

Nachlaß, and states that there is no definite way of knowing Nietzsche's intention. Derrida states: ""I have forgotten my umbrella." These words were found, isolated in quotation marks, among Nietzsche's unpublished manuscripts. Maybe a citation. It might have been a sample picked up somewhere, or overheard here or there. Perhaps it was the note for some phrase to be written here or there. There is no infallible way of knowing the occasion of this sample or what it could have been later grafted onto. We never will know *for sure* what Nietzsche wanted to say or do when he noted these words, nor even that he actually *wanted* anything" (123).

The argument to make here is that Derrida elevates the *Nachlaß*, to be more precise, one of its smaller "samples," onto the level of the published work. The fragment has no less authority than anything else that appears in the published works. In fact, to a certain extent, it has more authority. 'Nachlaß' as noun is related to the verb, 'vernachlässigen,' which means 'to neglect' and 'to ignore.' Yet, as indicated before, neglect is never simply neglect in Derrida --what is neglected is that which is suppressed in the argument, yet that has no less relevance to it.

Derrida's stand is that the undecidable character of the sample subverts the text as argument, rather than the argument of or in the text. Derrida indicates that Nietzsche may have wanted to publish the sample, or, as a prefatorial comment, that it may always have played an important role, albeit in the 'back' of Nietzsche's mind. "Regenschirm" may stand for a lot of things, the protective shield of metaphysical understanding being one of them.

Yet, Derrida's point, in this context, is that the excerpt, in the context of Nietzsche's oeuvre, does not mean anything by itself. Its most obvious designation of an 'umbrella forgotten' cannot correspond with the meaning of the Nietzsche text in general, except perhaps in an elaborated fashion.

Yet, it is precisely in this elaborate and self-compelling fashion with which the recipient establishes meaning that the sample exposes the will to mean itself, that is, the will to see the text as argument. Derrida indicates: "If Nietzsche had indeed meant to say something, might it not be just that limit to the will to mean, which, much as a necessarily differential will to power, is forever divided; folded and manifolded. To whatever lengths one might carry a conscientious interpretation, the hypothesis that the totality of Nietzsche's text, in some monstrous way, might well be of the type "I have forgotten my umbrella" cannot be denied" (133).

Derrida's paper, which appears under the title "Die Unterschriften interpretieren (Nietzsche/ Heidegger)," as a third manifestation of Derrida's complicated Nietzsche conception, is relevant to our analysis in that in it Derrida focuses on the intricacies of Heidegger's conception of Nietzsche, rather than on Nietzsche and his texts themselves. Derrida's method to establish and communicate to his readers what he holds of Nietzsche is rather unexpected: Derrida proceeds through Heidegger. It seems as if his argument can only take shape by contrast. Instead of providing his own interpretation of Nietzsche, Derrida starts off by setting out the parameters of an analysis primarily focused on what he considers to be erroneous in Heidegger's.

The method itself does not considerably deviate from that which Derrida applies to the Nietzsche texts. In Heidegger's *Nietzsche*, Derrida focuses on the work's preface, on the motto that precedes it, the occasional quotation mark, as well as on other stylistic elements such as the "auslassungszeichen." The preface, in its innocent sincerity, reveals the line along which Heidegger shapes his argument. The first word of the very first passage, Derrida's method implies, already contains truth about Heidegger's interpretive derailment. The method itself is an investigation into that which is suppressed in the Heidegger text. In one of the sections on Heidegger's Nietzsche analysis, Derrida states: "Before the first words (...) from the preface there is [in Heidegger] an exergue. It is taken from the *Gay Science* and its first word is "life." "Life" stands at the extreme outset of Heidegger's book --even before its beginning, before any decision between biography and biology. Here (...) Heidegger is not satisfied with breaking off the passage before its end. He also skips over a few words and replaces them with ellipses (...)" (66).

Derrida's critique, in this context, is launched against Heidegger's attempt to understand Nietzsche in terms of a totalizing unity. Heidegger's "hermeneutic strategy," as expressed in his tendency to suppress divergence in Nietzsche rather than to stress it, is centred around the will to define Nietzsche as having one intention, one will, one thought and one desire (all of Nietzsche's signatures in the text are assembled under one).

Yet, turning Nietzsche into a consistent, metaphysical thinker is forcing one's own interpretive mould onto a text and thinker that must escape it. Derrida states: "(...) who ever said that a person bears a single name? Certainly not Nietzsche. (...) What is it --the oneness of a name, the assembled unity of Western metaphysics? Is it anything more or less than the desire (...) for a proper name, for a single, unique name and a thinkable genealogy? Next to Kierkegaard, was not Nietzsche one of the few great thinkers who multiplied his names and played with signatures, identities, and masks? Who named himself more than once, with several names? And what if that would be the heart of the matter (...) of his thinking?" (67).

A few Reservations...

By way of concluding our analysis, we can now state that Derrida's revalorization of the marginal textual parts in Nietzsche indicates that Nietzsche, in Derrida's view, wishes to demonstrate perhaps something else than what is merely suggested by the main body of texts. In following Derrida's argument, we have seen that the (only apparently) 'neglected' textual elements in Nietzsche are in fact places of resistance, that is, resistance to the main text, its main argument or to the elaboration of truth itself. The exergue, the preface and the small enigmatic excerpt from the *Nachlaß*, all somehow subvert, if not the argument of the text itself, then at least the text as (metaphysical) argument or truth. These places all somehow expose the recipient's will to define and make consistent according to one proposition whatever element appears in the text. And they all identify Nietzsche's 'argument' as an attempt to expose this will, rather than to make an argument in the proper sense of the word. Understanding of the text proper is postponed or obstructed, if only temporarily.

Should one wish to specify Derrida's conception of Nietzsche, one would have to conclude now that Derrida's Nietzsche wishes to identify nothing else but this will of human beings to understand, that is, their will to make logical and create consistency according to a set of preestablished givens. Derrida's Nietzsche tells the recipient of his text to focus on elements such as the preface, the exergue, the complexity of the disseminated 'theme,' and this in order to establish, if one must, that Nietzsche does not necessarily *want* to say anything at all. It establishes, if anything, that he wishes to 'unveil' this need to understand, this will, and reveal it as an attempt to establish truth, to obtain stability and peace of mind.

In *Spurs*, as well as in the other two texts, Derrida refers almost exclusively to works such as the *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* and *Ecce Homo*, and this must also somehow account for the ideological space in which Derrida wishes to see Nietzsche move. These texts are indicative of a 'Nietzsche' concerned with the subversion of the old metaphysical tradition, and with the alternative of a 'going beyond' metaphysics and essence. In these texts, beyond a partial structure of random aphorisms, Nietzsche can be said to envisage and create a certain strategy and vision of how a world beyond metaphysical essence should be lived. If only because of the unusual form in which he presents the philosophical discourse.[23]

Yet, Derrida's argument of the truth-subverting textual parts in Nietzsche must nuance these ideological implications. Focusing on the more aphoristic texts of Nietzsche's oeuvre, that is, texts that clearly lack a linear development of the philosophical discourse, can also be said to ultimately support Derrida's penchant for a Nietzschean configuration inscribed in ideological or methodological indeterminacy.

Evaluating the way in which Derrida approaches the Nietzsche text is no easy task, partially because of the complexity of the method. Part of the difficulty, in my view, is Derrida's paradoxical attempt to arrive at a certain essence when he speaks of the Nietzsche text (identification of an essential characteristic), while referring to this essence as something that goes beyond it. Ultimately, even the will to expose the human will to understand and define, rather than presenting an argument proper, can be said to be inscribed in a single and unambiguous will. True, Derrida calls this will "manifold," which means, if I understand it, that this will or intention is not stable, that it changes and is superseded by different versions and manifestations of it. Yet, the fact is that Derrida, by presenting the 'truth' of a Nietzschean will to expose, not truth, but the act of understanding itself, implies that Derrida himself treats the Nietzsche text as a totality, if only at certain instances. Leaving the text 'speak for itself' as an intended, or half-intended, manifestation of heterogeneity, it seems to me, is still having the text obey a metaphysical mode of interpretation.

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[23] Derrida starts off by quoting from a letter Nietzsche wrote in 1872. One of the first sentences of the analysis reads: „From (...) Nietzsche's letter, I shall snip out the bits and pieces of an erratic exergue" (35). In *Spurs*, Derrida refers most frequently to *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*. Yet, as Colli also indicates, the *Wissenschaft* is of a deceiving simplicity: it lacks the reassurance of a clear intention: „Sooft man *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* liest, kommt sie einem anders vor, neu obwohl die Thematik leicht zugänglich zu sein scheint und die Sprache klar und ausgewogen ist, ohne verzerrte Argumentation, ohne Doppeldeutigkeit. Vielleicht ist es die Distanz des Genesenen, das Fehlen von Schmähungen --wer schmäht, ist nicht fröhlich, der ist krank--, was den Leser verwirrt. Ein harter, polemischer Akzent klärt sofort die Absichten des Autors und nagelt die Interpretation einseitig fest. (...) In der *Fröhlichen Wissenschaft* lassen sich alle Widersprüche Nietzsches aufspüren, die hier jedoch weder auffällig noch verletzend wirken, ja, beinahe nicht als Widersprüche erscheinen" (659).

Derrida's method also seems to imply that there is more consistency in Nietzsche than he would like to admit.

Derrida's observation of a Nietzschean preoccupation with peripheral textual topoï, though he does not make this observation explicitly, seems to be valid: there is in Nietzsche an awareness of the text as text. The breakdown of a narrative logic, the central position attributed to prefaces and introductions in the majority of his works (Nietzsche speaks of "Vorrede" and "Vorwort," and at times introduces his text by more than one), the strategy of contradiction, fragmentation and dispersal, as well as the unclear status of the *Nachlaß*, all somehow contribute to a 'political' space of subversion.[24] At the same time, however, it remains questionable whether the subversion is one of traditional reading and writing patterns, or whether, as Derrida argues, it is rather that of all proper argumentation.

The subversive influence that exercises the marginal upon that which is established, however, is a point well taken (one of Derrida's more prominent merits, in my opinion): if we approach the text as hand and fingers (the lower parts of our arm), then Derrida will focus on the nails, and establish that the minor and neglected parts of the hand subvert its status as hand. Nails are residue: we cut them and throw them away. Yet, the growing nails of our fingers and hand remind us of the fact that the hand cannot exist as a permanent entity in and by itself. The hand changes, from minute to minute. Demonstrated by the weekly clip of our nails on our fingers, the hand, as a permanent body in and by itself, does not exist.

Yet, transposing this analogy back to the text, it remains questionable whether there is any real future for an analysis that breaks down the 'affirmative' power of the hand as hand, that aims to identify those parts that 'silence' the text rather than make it speak.

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[24] Both *Morgenröthe* and *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, to name but two of Nietzsche's works, have extended prefaces that each consist of several sections.

CONCLUSION

In the following, I will venture a few concluding remarks. I must speak here with a certain trepidation: perhaps, as Derrida puts it, the conclusion cannot be anything else than the preface to another study. The conclusion requires a degree of precision that, to a certain extent, has been delayed throughout the analysis, a level of precision and truth about Nietzsche that here, too, might still be evaded rather than actually obtained.

In the analysis as a whole, I can be said to have explored and indicated some of the reasons behind the large variety of Nietzsche interpretations. I have also dealt with a few examples of interpretation separately. The picture that emerges from our analysis is that of a colourful pattern of widely divergent, and often contradictory interpretations.

I have only partially discussed the reasons for this plurality as a problem in itself. I have indicated, as a point of departure, that answers should be found in both Nietzsche and his interpreters. I have argued that understanding of a text will change over time, yet also that with Nietzsche these changes have been more frequent and dramatic.

The first three chapters deal with points of contention in the Nietzsche text itself. In the introductory chapter, I identified concepts, style and structure as hermeneutic obstacles in the act of understanding. This identification was established on the basis of what the interpreters themselves have considered to be contentious in Nietzsche, rather than on a personal reading. I have primarily used the paradigm of Nietzsche as prism as an attempt to demonstrate that speaking of Nietzsche, in the case of many a critic, is a manifestation of the self.

Nietzsche, himself, it has been argued before, indicates that this may always be the case. The mind must always appropriate the unknown according to that which is somehow familiar. Yet if, much like the cow that chews its valuable cud, the act of slow reading and the careful digestion of that which is new and unusual function as antidotes to improper assimilation, then the one who reads best is perhaps the one who abstains from drawing a rash conclusion. Perhaps the failure to draw any resolution in Nietzsche whatsoever is the wisest strategy.

Derrida's Nietzsche analysis, for instance, takes shape well after the collective mind has first exposed itself to Nietzsche. If slow reading means distance in time, then perhaps the more contemporary views are the more accurate. Derrida's stands out in particular as the pinnacle of contemporaneous thinking in its absolute refusal to either propose or conclude. The more accurate interpretations would be those, then, that interrogate the act of understanding itself, and somehow argue for its delay or deferral, for as long as this is reasonably possible.

My argument, however, has also been that Derrida's Nietzsche conception serves his own methodological purposes. The Nietzsche somehow constitutes itself on the premise that there is no underlying and stabilizing meaning. The text writes itself as text, and not as argument or truth.

We have seen that Derrida focuses on very specific textual instances in Nietzsche that somehow fall outside of the parameters of the main text. The preface, the exergue, the enigmatic scribble, the inserted leaflet between introduction and actual elaboration, to mention just a few topics of interest for Derrida in the Nietzsche text, --all exude the intricate mind-set of an avant-garde spirit and approach. Surrealism, with André Breton as its main spokesman, cultivated a strong sense for the Parisian 'passage,' this high, vaulted architectural construct of glass and crystal that functions as a space between buildings and the outside street. This construct is both a part of and separated from the outside world. Derrida's Nietzsche, to put it in more provocative terms, is the Nietzsche of the Parisian avant-garde. He calls attention to the textual 'passages' in his works, passages of transition that somehow expose his own text as text, rather than as argument or truth. The 'topos of transition' speaks of both the necessity and impossibility of truth.

With Gide, Hesse and Kundera we have touched on the difficulty of a literary appropriation. We have also dealt with the question of influence, and established that influence in the traditional sense cannot take place. I have suggested the alternative of a trace, something that, in my opinion, is more in line with influence understood in terms of appropriation. With the master-pupil construct in both Gide and Hesse, I have attempted to show how appropriation works in the case of these authors. Yet, I have also discussed the importance of this construct on a personal level.

I have attempted to demonstrate that for Gide and Hesse, Nietzsche himself somehow complies to the rules of the 'mentor-and-his-pupil' construct: there is a certain mythologizing of Nietzsche in both Gide and Hesse. Yet, at the same time, I have argued that this mythologizing does not necessarily imply an ongoing involvement with Nietzsche's thought. Their interest, first and foremost, it seems, is a literary or aesthetic interest, that is, an interest in the personal expression of the self.

In this respect, influence defined as an ongoing preoccupation with a thinker's thought might be something that takes place in Derrida, rather than in Gide or in Hesse. If true influence occurs only when a thinker is subjected to a continuous and persistent scrutiny, it is questionable whether in Gide and Hesse influence, defined as such, takes place.

Gide's and Hesse's Nietzsche configuration, beyond their respective appropriations, still stands: for these writers, Nietzsche represents, at least at an initial stage, the Zarathustrian child, the liberator of the senses, the philosopher of life and critic of dogma. Nietzsche is the teacher of a purely authentic life beyond pity and stultifying religion. Yet, Nietzsche is also a fanatic, his philosophy, in the final analysis, an abstraction rather than a practical reality. The liberation and the style of life that Nietzsche seeks is ultimately deemed impossible.

With Kundera, I have attempted to broach the question of a both literary and postmodern reworking or interpretation of Nietzsche. Though confined to the limits of one chapter only, our analysis has established that a more playful approach to Nietzsche takes place in the writing of Kundera. Kundera focuses on

Nietzsche as a philosopher of aphorisms, and the explicit yet noncommittal insertion of a Nietzschean philosophical paradigm in one of his later works of literature, in my opinion, is indicative of a less restrictive conception of Nietzsche.

I have argued that the plurality of configurations is also something that can be explained by the Nietzsche text itself. This opinion still stands. In Chapter two, I attempted to demonstrate that the reasons for Nietzsche's metaphysical ambivalence, to a large extent, reside in the Nietzsche text itself. Though limited in range, my investigation into the powerful image of the child at play on the beach of life shows that the conditions for the child escaping the metaphysical powers of the game as real are limited.

In chapter three, I focused on the concept of the Dionysian, and attempted to show how the intricacies of Nietzsche's definition have prompted a set of rather diverse readings. Of particular interest, in this respect, is Nietzsche's use of the word "Entzückung," especially in relation to the Dionysian state that human beings are asked to undergo. That which emerges, in my opinion, is a sheer unresolvable dilemma between body and spirit. Nietzsche holds on to a knowledge that assures the child's awareness of play as play and subsequent escape from metaphysical seriousness. Yet the knowledge, as Nietzsche generally wishes to define it, is also that which materializes through the body rather than through the intellect.

The sadomasochistic current that we have been able to detect in a work such as *Die Geburt* (yet also, for instance, in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*), is yet another obstacle in the assimilating of Nietzsche's philosophical thought. The sensual gaze of cruelty is a powerful subdiscourse in the Nietzsche text, and it does not always go well with philosophical exposition. The response by readers of German is often one of dismissive wonder. Nietzsche's language is that of the 'Leib' and not of the more spiritualised 'Körper,' though both words designate the body. The first reaction is often one of repulsion. Let me, by way of conclusion, illustrate this, what I consider to be one of the most interesting problems in Nietzsche, with a quotation from *Zarathustra*. In it Zarathustra speaks of his relation to man, and defines this relationship in terms of a fisherman, his bait and the catch:

> Thue dich auf und wirf mir deine Fische und Glitzer-Krebse zu! Mit einem besten Köder ködere ich mir heute die wunderlichsten Menschen-Fische! --mein Glück selber werfe ich hinaus in alle Weiten und Fernen, zwischen Aufgang, Mittag und Niedergang, ob nicht an meinem Glücke viele Menschen-Fische zerrn und zappeln lernen. Bis sie, anbeissend an meine spitzen verborgenen Haken, hinauf müssen in *meine* Höhe, die buntesten Abgrund-Gründlinge zu dem boshaftigsten aller Menschen-Fischfänger. *Der* nämlich bin ich von Grund und Anbeginn, ziehend, heranziehend, hinaufziehend, aufziehend, ein Zieher, Züchter und Zuchtmeister, der sich nicht umsonst einstmals zusprach: „Werde wer du bist!“ (*KSA*, IV, 297).

Zarathustra's words of wisdom, in general, have a distinctly sensual quality, something that is difficult to render in translation. The image in this quotation is very graphic: Zarathustra seduces man, yet the sharp hook he uses concealed by the bait of "happiness" and "joy." Of crucial importance, in my opinion, is the sharp 's-sound,' rendered in words such as "zerrn," "zappeln," "bis," "zwischen" and the different forms of "ziehen" and "Zucht." The words evoke the almost tangible image of a powerful, compliance-exacting force. It is an image of power without mercy, of a process of seduction that only slowly unfolds.

The English translation by Walter Kaufmann, when comparing this particular quotation, sounds much more formal. His final sentence reads as follows: "For that is what I am through and through: reeling in, raising up, raising, a raiser, cultivator, and disciplinarian, who once counselled himself, not for nothing: Become who you are!" (239). But words such as "cultivator" and "disciplinarian," with their Latin-based origin, somehow sound to me much cleaner, more sterile and even ethereal. This is more the language of the *Körper*, with its opposition to 'Geist,' than that of the Nietzschean *Leib.*[1]

In general, one should not mythologize the intricacies of a certain language, be it German or English. But if this physical and sensual quality of Nietzsche's language is difficult to retain in translation, and I do think that Kaufmann's translation, for instance, constantly moves away from this aspect of Nietzsche, then perhaps the first and ultimate difficulty in Nietzsche interpretation would be these different configurations that exist through translation. The English

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[1] Walter Kaufmann's translation: New York: The Modern Library, 1995.

Nietzsche now emerges in oppositon to the German, to name here but two of the innumerable Nietzsches at hand.

Perhaps as a final observation, I should indicate to what extent my own version of Nietzsche is indicative of a largely personal, ideological and methodological stand. The Nietzsche configuration that emerges from my analysis is Nietzsche as a mystic, whose joy resides in the complexifying of questions rather than in their resolution. He is a sensual writer, perverse, Dionysian, and cruel, perhaps in spite of himself. He is a sceptic and fatalist, for whom language is insufficient, whose attempt to truthfully communicate his thoughts to the reader and listener is steeped in failure. He is a nihilist, whose philosophical message is circular. He is a tragic character, whose need for reconciling the body and spirit with freedom from metaphysical presuppositions, is inscribed in failure.

For Nietzsche, philosophy equals autobiography, at least at some point in his work. Writing, words, and language are all nothing but an expression of the self. Perhaps, too, if I read well, will emerge from this analysis the contours of my own alter egos.

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